

Diplomatic exodus from Kabul

LONDON (R) — Britain and Japan joined an exodus of foreign diplomats from Kabul Friday as the Soviet-backed government accused Western countries of trying to undermine confidence in it. On Thursday, the United States said it was evacuating its embassy in Afghanistan where rebel clashes with government troops are mounting. The withdrawals were in line with a general departure of diplomats on security grounds. The last Soviet troops are scheduled to leave Kabul when the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo announced the closure. Most embassies and aid agencies had already cut their staff or sent home dependents during a period of heavy rocket attacks on Kabul last August. Pressure has been increasing for the withdrawal of remaining diplomats mainly because of fears the Afghan army would be unable to stop the Mujahideen guerrillas from shutting Kabul airport after the Soviets quit. The only land route still open is the Salang Highway towards the Soviet border which passes through mountains held by guerrillas.

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His Majesty King Hussein Thursday confers with Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg in Aqaba (Petra photo)

Stoltenberg ends visit after Aqaba audience

AMMAN (J.T.) — Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg left Amman Friday for Cairo at the end of a three-day visit to Jordan during which he was received in audience by His Majesty King Hussein in Aqaba. The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said that the King and Stoltenberg reviewed the European role in promoting the Middle East peace process and the European stand with regard to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). During the meeting, King Hussein stressed the importance of the European role in convening an international conference to resolve the Palestinian issue in all its aspects, now that the PLO has presented its genuine orientation towards a just and comprehensive solution, Petra said.

The agency quoted the Norwegian minister as paying tribute to King Hussein's efforts at all levels to reach security and peace in the region through an international conference. The minister also referred to the very good relations between Jordan and Norway based on friendship and mutual cooperation. The meeting in Aqaba was attended by Prime Minister Zaid Rifai, Royal Court Chief Marshal Sharif Zaid Ibn Shaker, the King's special advisor Amer Khamash and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Marwan Al Qasem. Following a three-day stay in Cairo, the Norwegian minister is due to fly on to Tunis for a meeting with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. In addition to Stoltenberg, politicians from Denmark and Sweden visit Tunis this weekend for talks with the PLO, highlighting the Scandinavian role in Middle East peace politics. The three countries, together with Finland, have emerged as key figures in international efforts to draw Israel into a dialogue with the PLO. Svend Auken, leader of Denmark's opposition Social Democratic Party, was due Friday afternoon and expected to see Arafat, a Danish embassy spokesman said. Arafat will also have talks with two prominent members of Sweden's ruling Social Democratic Party, Scandinavian diplomats said. The Swedish politicians are Evert Svensson, who chairs a Christian group within the party and has had a longstanding interest in the Middle East, and Karl-Erik Svartberg, president of Sweden's United Nations Association.

LAST-MINUTE NEWS

Bush: Too soon for top-level PLO contact

WASHINGTON (AP) — President George Bush said Friday that the United States was only beginning its relations with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and that it was too soon to say when a top member of his administration would meet with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. He said the United States would continue to have a dialogue with the organisation "as long as they stay hooked and stay committed" to principles aimed at negotiating peace with Israel. "I haven't given any thought at all" to a when a meeting should be held between Arafat and a top-level U.S. official, Bush told a White House news conference.

Iraq proclaims new amnesty for Kurds

ANKARA (AP) — Turkey's Foreign Ministry announced Friday that Iraq has proclaimed a new amnesty for the Kurdish refugees who fled to Turkey in August. The announcement said Iraq declared a new amnesty at the urging of Turkey because there were Kurdish refugees who wanted to return to their homeland. The new amnesty will remain in effect until the end of February, the announcement said. Iraq declared an amnesty soon after 60,000 Kurds crossed the joint border into Turkey. The deadline for the first amnesty was Oct. 6.

Reagan, Bush could be forced to testify

WASHINGTON (R) — The judge in the Iran-contra criminal case said Friday that he has the legal power to force President Bush and former President Reagan to testify at the trial of ex-White House aide Oliver North. But the judge put off any decision on whether to throw out the defence subpoenas, which have been challenged by government lawyers as unprecedented. They argued that Reagan and Bush enjoy executive privilege and cannot be forced to testify. "As far as the power of the court to require testimony of Reagan or Bush, I do not think there is any question," Federal Judge Gerhard Gesell ruled from the bench. "I have no doubt of the naked power if I have to use it."

Taba talks end with no progress

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli-Egyptian talks on the handover of the Red Sea beach of Taba ended without progress Friday as Israel awaited anxiously a planned Cairo declaration on the future of the resort. Chief Israeli negotiator Reuven Merhav and his Egyptian counterpart Nabil Al Arabi failed even to agree on a date to resume talks, Israeli officials said. Merhav, director-general of Israel's foreign ministry, said he was still waiting to see the text of a planned Cairo decree to extend Egyptian tourist law over a luxury hotel and a holiday village in the 700-metre beachfront.

Israel told it can use Moscow embassy

TEL AVIV (R) — The Soviet Union has told Israel its consular mission may use the former Israeli embassy building in Moscow, empty since the Kremlin severed ties with the Zionist state in 1967, Israeli officials said Friday. But the Soviet Foreign Ministry told the senior Israeli diplomat in Moscow, Aryeh Levin, the move did not constitute a raising of the status of the consular delegation, which remained under the authority of the Dutch embassy, they said.

Sinhalese militants kill 47 in 2 days

COLOMBO (AP) — Sinhalese militants shot and killed three people in separate attacks in Sri Lanka, raising the number of deaths blamed on the radicals in the past two days to 47, police said Friday. One of the three people killed was a supporter of the governing United National Party. Alarmed by the increased violence, the government has placed troops on alert across the island nation since Thursday, said officials.

King optimistic of convening summit

AMMAN (Petra) — Consultations and contacts between Arab leaders are under way to hold an Arab summit conference, since there are good reasons for convening such a meeting soon, His Majesty King Hussein said Thursday.

"I am confident that the current contacts will result in such a meeting among Arab leaders and I have big hopes that such a meeting will be held soon," King Hussein said in statements to reporters shortly before leaving Cairo for home at the end of talks with President Hosni Mubarak. "We are optimistic and we continue to work hand in hand to serve the higher Arab interests," he said, offered him a chance to discuss and review different developments in the Arab region and now stand together confident of the future and hope to carry out our duty as we best as we can."

Asked what he expects from the new Bush administration in Washington, King Hussein said

that fruitful contacts with Bush administration were bound to take place. He said that the world was now witnessing a change and there was a clear orientation towards resolving outstanding issues so that world peace and stability can be achieved.

The King said Europe was adopting a very positive and constructive stand which would promote the peace process. Speaking to reporters before the King's departure, President Mubarak said coordination was continuing on all matters of concern to the Arab Nation in general and Egypt and Jordan in particular.

Mubarak said Jordan, Egypt, Iraq and North Yemen were embarking on plans that could lead to the formation of a united economic bloc. The plan, he said, is not directed against any other Arab state and it is open for all Arab countries to join in.

King Hussein earlier held a meeting with the Egyptian president at Al Qubba Palace which

was attended at a later stage by prime ministers Zaid Rifai and Atef Sidki and other officials. The two prime ministers held separate talks in the presence of Jordanian and Egyptian ministers and top officials to review measures to enhance bilateral cooperation.

Call from Bush

While in Cairo, King Hussein received a telephone call from U.S. President George Bush, who thanked the King for his congratulatory cable on his taking office.

Bush said he was looking forward to fruitful cooperation with the King to achieve a just and durable solution for the Middle East problem.

Before going to Cairo King Hussein visited Saudi Arabia and held talks with King Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz.

King Hussein and the Jordanian delegation arrived in Aqaba and were received by their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah and Prince Faisal and senior officials.

8 Palestinians wounded in W. Bank, Gaza protests

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israeli soldiers shot and wounded eight Palestinians Friday during protests in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Villagers at Salbit, near the West Bank city of Nablus set fire to an employment office run by the Israeli "civil administration," sources said. Troops wounded two Palestinians in the ensuing protest.

In the Gaza Strip town of Rafah, troops closed indefinitely a few dozen stores along a street where cars are frequently stoned, sources said.

Soldiers firing to disperse protesters wounded to Palestinians at Gaza's Deir Al Balah refugee camp, two at Sba'ti camp and one at Khan Younis, hospital officials said.

An army spokesman said one Palestinian was shot and wounded at Tulikarem camp in the West Bank. He said he had reports of only two others being shot — the two teenagers at Deir Al Balah.

'Secret PLO contacts'

Staff at the luxury American Colony hotel in Arab Jerusalem said police raided the premises earlier in the week and found seven West Bank employees sleeping there without permits.

Hotel-staff said police made similar raids earlier in the 13-month-old Palestinian uprising. The maximum fine for the offence is 500 shekels (\$276).

Staff at Arab Jerusalem's St. John's Hospital said police asked Thursday to check the identity papers of more than 60 workers and told them they would require work permits at some unspecified future date.

Meanwhile, Israeli peace activists rallied at a "tent city" in the Naqurah Desert Friday to protest the jailing of Palestinians without trial, and a cabinet minister called for opening talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Also Friday, the Hebrew daily

Maariv said an adviser to Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin held a series of secret meetings with a jailed Palestinian leader on new political initiatives.

Reports on the meetings between Rabin aide Shmuel Goren and Faisal Al Hussein, the chief pro-PLO leader in the occupied territories, were passed on to top PLO leaders abroad, the newspaper said.

Such meeting would mark a shift in the policy of the Israeli government.

Hussein is scheduled to be released from prison Sunday. He has been held without trial for most of the past 21 months, accused of playing a role in the Palestinian uprising.

Defence ministry spokesman Eitan Haber declined to comment on the reported meetings.

Fuad Al Aref, an associate of Hussein, said he had visited Hussein last Monday and that the jailed leader had denied rumours of exploratory talks with Israeli leaders.

Arafat, EEC 'troika' discuss peace conference

MADRID (Agencies) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat held his first official talks with the European Economic Community (EEC) Friday in a bid to enlist EEC support for an international conference aimed at ending the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Arafat met the foreign ministers of Spain, the current president of the EEC Council of Ministers, France and Greece for two hours and told them Europe should be involved in efforts to bring about such a conference, diplomats said.

Diplomats said Arafat called informally for EEC recognition of Palestine in his talks with the three ministers, known as the "troika," and in a four-hour meeting with Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez Thursday night.

The three new were designated to spearhead an EEC Middle East peace initiative launched after the PLO recognised Israel's

right to exist and opened a dialogue with the United States. Israel has rejected an international peace conference and called for direct talks with the Arabs.

The PLO leader later had an audience with King Juan Carlos, something not granted when he first visited Madrid 10 years ago. Spanish Foreign Minister Francisco Fernandez Ordóñez has said the purpose of Arafat's 24-hour visit was "to inform and be informed," rather than seek tangential results.

None of the 12 EEC member countries has recognised the independent State of Palestine proclaimed last year. Diplomats have said recognition by individual members would create divisions within the group.

An Israeli spokesman said reacting to the Madrid meeting, Israel was "gravely disappointed."

The spokesman said in a state-

ment that the talks "will not contribute to peace."

Arafat arrived in the Spanish capital Thursday night from Iraq and went directly to a four-hour working dinner with Gonzalez.

Neither made a statement following the meeting, but a Spanish government spokesman said both men considered 1989 "a very important year" in the search for peace in the Middle East.

Their talks centred on how to start negotiations leading to a peace conference sponsored by the United Nations, and Gonzalez told Arafat the EEC would focus on ways of launching a dialogue based on the Palestinians' right to self-determination and Israel's right to secure borders.

Spanish diplomats said the EEC approach also included withdrawal of Israel from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and respect of human rights. Fernandez Ordóñez and his

Higher committee meets in Cairo today

CAIRO (Petra) — Industry and Trade Minister Hamdi Tabbaa and Egyptian Minister of International Cooperation Maurice Makramallah Friday signed minutes of preparatory meetings ahead of Saturday's meeting here of the Joint Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Committee co-chaired by Prime Minister Zaid Rifai and his Egyptian counterpart Atef Sedki.

The minutes include scopes of cooperation and the steps taken to implement earlier resolutions and recommendations of the higher committee.

Tabbaa and Makramallah said Jordanian-Egyptian relations can now serve as a model to be emulated by Arab countries. They also voiced the hope that such cooperation would be further enhanced to achieve economic integration.

In a statement to Petra, Tabbaa said the preparatory committee's decisions and recommendations would be submitted to the higher committee for endorsement.

He added that the minutes covered scopes of cooperation in the fields of tourism, transport, commercial exchange, education, culture, health, economy and mining.

Tabbaa said the annual volume of trade between Jordan and Egypt amounts to \$350 million and that both countries seek to increase it. He noted that the Aqaba-Nuweiba sea route was one of the major joint projects and that it provided an opportunity for wider cooperation.

The Jordanian side to the meeting will include the ministers of transport, labour, energy, information, higher education, interior, agriculture, tourism and industry and trade, as well as the president of the Aqaba Region Authority, the chairman and chief executive officer of Royal Jordanian, ministry of industry and trade's secretary general and the Prime Minister's director.

Polisario declares one-month truce

PARIS (R) — Polisario Front guerrillas will observe a ceasefire throughout February in the war with Morocco for independence of the Western Sahara, their leader announced Friday. Mohammed Abdul Aziz told the weekly French magazine Le Point that the one-month truce was a goodwill gesture ahead of peace talks with King Hassan II of Morocco which are expected to reopen within days. "To encourage dialogue and the search for peace we have just decided unilaterally to observe a military truce for the whole of February," he told the magazine. The first direct talks between the two sides in the 13-year conflict were held Jan. 4. While the Polisario have fought for an independent state in the former Spanish colony of Western Sahara for 13 years, the hostilities are presently at a low level. Abdul Aziz pledged that an independent Western Sahara would pose no problem to Morocco, either in economic or security terms. "We can guarantee that we will never allow force to set up military bases nor will we sign military treaties with any third country," he said. Polisario hopes for detailed talks, page 2

Al Hussein attends event, underlines attractions of port Aqaba hosts 280-km power boat race

AQABA (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Friday attended the Offshore Power Boat Race, organised by the Royal Jordanian Water Skiing and Boating Federation, the Royal Jordanian Coast Guard, the Royal Yachts and the Aquamarina Hotel in cooperation with the Ports Corporation and in coordination with Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Taking part in the 280-kilometre race were their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah Ibn Al Hussein and Prince Faisal Ibn Al Hussein and many other contestants from Jordan, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Australia, Britain, and West Germany.

The contestants raced off from Aqaba, through the territorial waters of Egypt and Saudi Arabia and to Farash Island and back.

Commenting on the race, King Hussein said the sport event pro-

vides an opportunity for Arab youth, particularly youth from the Gulf states, to take part.

The King noted that Aqaba Port was an attraction for tourists and visitors from the Arab World and outside and that it is a unique port in the world in view of its good and pleasant climate.

The King voiced hope that sport events and youth gathering will hold more frequently in Aqaba and that the port will enjoy the status it deserves in the world.

King Hussein pointed out that Jordan had an abundance of antiquities.

He also expressed hope that the whole world know more and more about Jordan, which lies in the heart of the Arab World.

The race was attended by Her Majesty Queen Noor and a number of officials and citizens.

U.N. seeks 'incentives' for Iran-Iraq talks

NICOSIA (Agencies) — U.N. mediator Jan Eliasson arrived in Iraq from Iran Friday searching for "new incentives" which might lure the Gulf war foes back to the bargaining table after an 11-week stand-off.

He inspected the Gulf war ceasefire lines in the region and was scheduled to fly by helicopter to Baghdad later for meetings with senior Iraqi leaders, including Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, who returns Friday from a visit to Rome, U.N. officials reported.

Eliasson, Sweden's U.N. ambassador and Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar's special emissary, said before leaving Tehran: "It is very important to create a new momentum to speed up the trend of future peace talks."

The negotiations began Aug. 25, five days after a U.N.-sponsored ceasefire in the eight-year-old Gulf war took effect.

They broke up in deadlock Nov. 11 after several sessions, with both sides accusing each other of obstructing progress.

Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency quoted Eliasson as saying at Tehran airport that his four days of talks with Prime Minister Hussein Musavi, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and other officials were "very useful and fruitful." He did not elaborate.

Eliasson told the Iraqi News Agency (INA) he discussed the whole range of issues with offi-

cials in Tehran but it was too early to say whether his mission would bring positive results.

"There has been a need for a new incentive," he said. "I hope this stage will be a contribution towards achieving peace."

He arrived at the southern Iraqi city of Basra with General Slavko Jovic, Yugoslav commander of the United Nations team of military observers monitoring the ceasefire.

Tehran Radio, monitored in Nicotia, also quoted Eliasson, as saying before leaving Tehran that it was important to create new incentives to speed up the peace talks.

The Iraqi government newspaper Al Jumhuriya said Eliasson would hear in Baghdad the same thing that he had heard from Iraqi negotiators in Geneva.

Iraq insists that the ceasefire should be fixed before negotiations move on to other items in Resolution 598, the U.N. Security Council's ceasefire resolution, and that the dredging of the Shatt Al Arab border waterway is part of the ceasefire.

Iran rejects the idea that the waterway should be cleaned of war debris before its legal status, one of the basic issues of the war, is resolved.

It says top priority should be given to the withdrawal of the Iraqi troops it claims still occupy 1,000 square kilometres of its western territory.

Amal-Hizbollah duels rage despite peace call

BEIRUT (R) — Duels between rival militia snipers erupted again in South Lebanon Friday, despite a call from Iran's president for them to settle their feud peacefully at talks in Damascus.

Sources in the Amal and Hizbollah (Party of God) militias said sporadic machine-gun-fire raked the hill-top village of Jubah, the focus of three weeks of battles.

The firing ignored a call by Iranian President Ali Khamenei for the two sides to end fighting in their year-long struggle for leadership of Lebanon's 1.5 million Shi'ites.

"I ask all Lebanese brothers to seize these opportunities and halt bloodshed and fighting so that bitter events are not repeated in Lebanon," he said at Friday prayers in Tehran.

Khamenei was referring to a joint Iranian-Syrian drive to reconcile the warring militias at peace talks in Damascus. More than 140 people have been killed and thousands displaced in this month's battles.

Lebanese sources in Syria said the talks would resume as soon as Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, who left for Tehran Wednesday returned to Damascus.

Velayati and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa brokered a truce between the militias announced Wednesday. Three hours later, it was shattered by fresh clashes in the Iqlim Al

Tufah district of South Lebanon. Independent sources said they doubted if Amal and Hizbollah could be quickly reconciled as the differences between them were too deep. The two militias are in religious, political and military competition with each other.

One source said it seemed virtually impossible to find a lasting solution despite the apparent termination of Syria and Iran to end to the war.

An Amal spokesman in Beirut said his group's main condition for peace remained that Hizbollah must hand over the killers of three Amal leaders shot dead Sept. 22 last year.

Hizbollah, which emerged in 1984 to challenge Amal's leadership over Lebanon's largest sect community, has repeatedly denied it was involved in the killings and has linked a return to South Lebanon to Shi'ite reconciliation.

It was ousted from the Shi'ite heartland in the south in five days of battles with Amal last April.

The two groups also differ on dealing with Israel. Hizbollah advocates launching attacks against Israeli troops and their local allies in the self-declared "security zone" set up by the Zionist state in South Lebanon in 1985.

Amal seeks an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon but opposes assaults on Israeli forces in case they provoke retaliatory raids on villages.

Shevardnadze due in Pakistan Feb. 4 for crucial Afghan talks

ISLAMABAD (Agencies) — Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze will hold crucial talks on the Afghan civil war with Pakistani leaders in early February, a Pakistani official said Friday.

Shevardnadze will be the highest-ranking Soviet official to visit Pakistan in more than 20 years, since Soviet Premier Alexi Kosygin visited in the late 1960s, the Foreign Ministry official said.

Shevardnadze is scheduled to make a one-day stop in Islamabad Feb. 4 and meet with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, the official said.

The Soviet foreign minister will fly to Islamabad after visiting China from Feb. 2-3.

"We hope our talks with the Soviet leader will pave the way for a peaceful settlement, although the situation on the ground in Afghanistan is depressing," said the spokesman.

Soviet Defence Minister Dmitri Yazov has arrived in Kabul, less than three weeks before the last of his troops are due to complete their withdrawal from Afghanistan.

An aide to Soviet Ambassador Yuri Vorontsov said that Yazov had arrived Wednesday for a working visit which was likely to be brief.

He was expected to meet President Najibullah and Defence Minister Shahmawaz Kanai, the aide said. He would give no further details.

The last of some 115,000 Soviet soldiers are due to be out of Afghanistan by Feb. 15 under last year's Geneva accord.

Western diplomats said the final stages of the pullout began in early January and some 15-20

Soviet transport planes are leaving Kabul each day carrying troops and strategic equipment.

Several Western countries have advised their citizens to leave Afghanistan immediately while commercial flights are still operating from Kabul.

U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker, during his first day on the job, decided Thursday to close the U.S. embassy in Kabul because of the growing turmoil as Soviet troops withdraw.

Shevardnadze's talks with top Pakistani leaders will take place just 11 days before the deadline for all Soviet troops to be gone from Afghanistan under a U.N.-brokered withdrawal accord signed last spring.

Western diplomats in Islamabad said a Shevardnadze visit would probably be Moscow's last effort to forge a peace agreement before its troops quit Afghanistan.

Vorontsov was in Islamabad earlier this month for talks with Pakistani officials and leaders of the seven-party alliance of Afghan guerrillas.

The Mujahedeen so far have shown no signs of willingness to agree on setting up a coalition government that would include the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), now ruling in Kabul, as Moscow wants.

After Vorontsov's visit, Mujahedeen alliance leader Sibghatullah Mojaddidi said there was no further point in talks with Moscow.

The Mujahedeen believe

Kabul will collapse quickly once Soviet troops have pulled out under the Geneva accords brokered by the United Nations last April.

On his return to Moscow, Vorontsov hinted that Soviet troops might stay in Afghanistan beyond the deadline because of continued heavy fighting.

Diplomats in Kabul, however, reported that the Soviet pullout was continuing and that as many as half the 30,000 Soviet troops who had ringed Kabul may have left already.

The rebel alliance, based in the Pakistani city Peshawar, has announced plans to hold a consultative assembly, or "shura" on Feb. 10 to name an interim government.

The meeting has been delayed by disputes between the predominantly Sunni Peshawar-based groups and four Iran-based parties of the minority Shi'ite Islamic sect over how many seats should be allotted to the Tehran groups.

Iran's foreign minister has urged Pakistan and Iranian-based Afghan rebels to unite and form a single government in Afghanistan, Tehran Radio said Friday.

The radio also quoted Ali Akbar Velayati as welcoming cooperation between the seven-party alliance based in Pakistan and the coalition based in Tehran.

Velayati was speaking after talks with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a representative of the Pakistan-based alliance who arrived in Tehran Thursday.

"He (Velayati) pointed to the need for all Afghan Mujahedeen to unite in forming a government that will conform with the wants of the Afghan people and interests of Islam," the radio said.



A helicopter gunship flies over a convoy of Soviet equipment protected by Afghan soldiers; Kabul residents queue up to buy bread, in short supply because roads into the capital have been cut.

Iran rejects Bush signal for better ties with U.S.

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Iranian President Ali Khamenei said Friday Tehran did not need ties with the United States, rejecting a signal for better relations by U.S. President George Bush.

"The Iranian nation does not need America. The American president, who has set conditions for resumption of ties with Iran, should know that it is we who have declared conditions," Tehran Radio quoted Khamenei as saying in a Friday prayer sermon.

In his inaugural speech last week, Bush made a passing remark about American hostages held in Lebanon by pro-Iranian militants, making clear that Washington would respond positively to any help leading to their release.

"We have always said that we will restart relations with America at a time when it has given up its arrogant ways," Tehran Radio monitored in Nicosia quoted Khamenei as saying.

"It is we who set conditions for the United States because we do not accept American oppression and interference in the affairs of other countries," Khamenei said. Iranian leaders have demanded the unblocking of Iranian assets frozen in the United States for 10 years as a goodwill gesture from Washington before resumption of ties.

They have also said they would intercede with their Lebanese allies on behalf of the 10 American hostages if the U.S. government used its influence to free four Iranians they say were kidnapped by right-wing militias in Lebanon in 1982.

Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, repeated his rejection of ties with the United States in November, saying Washington acted like a wolf towards a lamb in dealing



Ali Khamenei with Tehran.

But with the ceasefire in the Gulf war against Iraq in August and the adoption of a more moderate foreign policy by Iran, several articles favouring an improvement in ties with the United States have appeared in the Iranian press.

The Iranian newspaper Ettelaat said Monday Tehran should take up Bush's offer and cooperate with the Americans on the hostage issue.

It said national interests were more important than attachment to slogans and Iran should avoid making the diplomatic mistakes which led to its virtual isolation during the war.

But the hardliners in the Iranian leadership stand firm against ties with the "great Satan" as Iran described the United States.

U.S.-Israel 'coordination'

A key Israeli figure in the Iran-contra affair said Friday that the United States and Israel would likely combine efforts once again "in resurrecting their standing in Tehran" after the trial of Oliver North.

Yakov Nimrodi, a member of an Israeli team that handled the initial U.S. arms shipments to Iran, also said the project went awry because of the "amateurism" of the former National Security Council aide and an Israeli liaison.

Nimrodi alleged in a radio interview and in an article he wrote in the daily Jerusalem Post that a main reason for the disclosure of the affair was the replacement of his three-man team with North and Amir Nir, the late Israeli adviser, which in turn led to diversion of funds.

"Diverting money to the contras wouldn't have happened without distancing the Israeli trio. Without the entry of Oliver North and the late Amir Nir into this arena, believe me, this would not have happened," Nimrodi said on Israeli radio.

In the Post, he wrote that the Nir-North phase was characterised by "a mixture of amateurism, inability to read the map correctly, the absence of any experience in Iran, the lack of professional judgement and the resort to illegal actions."

Nimrodi, an arms dealer, handled the first three shipments of U.S. weapons to Iran in 1985 along with businessman Al Schwimmer and former foreign ministry director David Kimche. The trio was replaced by Nir after he intervened in the affair in the end of December 1985.

Nir, who resigned from his post last year, died in a mysterious plane crash in Mexico in December 1988. North, accused of concealing his efforts on behalf of the contras in Nicaragua, goes on trial next Tuesday.

Nimrodi credited his trio with the release of one American who was held hostage in Lebanon. Another, he said, was released due to Nir's efforts.

Somalia to free political prisoners

LONDON (R) — Somali Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Samantar has announced that his government would unconditionally release all political prisoners as part of a package of reforms in his war-torn country.

Samantar, on an official visit to Britain, invited Amnesty International, the London-based human rights organisation, to witness the liberation of between 250 and 300 detainees and said many would be freed by the end of April. Amnesty International accepted the offer but said there were well over a thousand political detainees in the country where rebels have been fighting the government for a decade.

Samantar, who has had talks with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe, Wednesday, also offered an amnesty to government opponents abroad.

He told reporters that prisoners to be released would include those held for political reasons since an upsurge of fighting between rebels and government troops in northern Somalia last year.

The war has hampered the distribution of aid to hundreds of thousands of victims of famine and drought in the north.

Samantar said an investigation was under way into alleged human rights abuses in Somalia.

Polisario hopes for detailed peace talks

MADRID (R) — A senior Polisario Front representative said in an interview published Friday he hoped the group's second meeting with Morocco's King Hassan would focus on details.

Bachir Mustafa Sayed, number two in the Polisario hierarchy, told El Pais newspaper that discussions were very general at a landmark first meeting earlier this month.

"Now the conversations have to take on a more rigorous tone, to bring about a tangible political agreement either on the whole issue or at least on the essential elements," Sayed said.

Sayed, in Spain to discuss prospects for an end to Polisario's 13-year-old war for independence in the Western Sahara, said Wednesday the next meeting with King Hassan was expected to take place at the end of this month.

"The meeting will produce some new step towards peace,"

apart from building on mutual confidence," Sayed told El Pais, adding that the next two months would be crucial for the future of the region.

But he rejected the notion that the conflict might be solved by creating a sort of autonomous region within Morocco for the Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony.

"Our negotiable objective is still independence... (But) we are prepared to guarantee that the future state will not turn its back on Morocco or have closer ties with some country other than Rabat," Sayed said.

He said the first talks with King Hassan, at his palace in Marrakech, had surprised the Polisario representatives because the king was informal and friendly, dispensing with ceremony and "showing his human side when he expressed grief at the tragedy of deaths and orphaned children in this war."

British embassy spokesman Antoine Haddad told the Associated Press: "We still have no hard information." He would not comment further.

Hana Naja, an employee of the Irish embassy's consular section in west Beirut, said Irish Amba-

Howe says meeting with Arafat possible

LONDON (AP) — Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe has said he might meet with Yasser Arafat "at a certain stage" if there was something to discuss with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) chairman.

"I'm not looking for a meeting for the sake of a meeting," he told a news conference Wednesday when asked whether he saw any value in meeting with Arafat.

"The possibility of such a meeting is not excluded," he said, adding: "I've no doubt that one will be possible at a certain stage."

Britain upgraded its approach to the PLO following Arafat's announcement that he recognises Israel and renounces terrorism, and a Howe deputy, William Waldegrave, talked with Arafat in Tunis earlier this month in the highest-level British-PLO meeting to date.

On Tuesday Waldegrave had talks with Bassam Abu Sharif, a senior Arafat aide, who is visiting London.

Abu Sharif hinted at raised hopes for a meeting between Arafat and U.S. Secretary of State James Baker.

Asked at a news conference whether the talks recently opened

between U.S. diplomats in Tunis and the PLO could be conducted at a higher level, he replied: "There is no reason whatsoever that makes me believe that any other or higher meeting is excluded."

Asked specifically about an Arafat-Baker meeting, he said: "Efforts are under way."

Abu Sharif rejected the idea of calling a truce in the 13-month-old Palestinian uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, but denied the PLO had threatened to kill Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij for suggesting such a truce.

Ahu Sharif referred to Freij as "our brother" and said nobody could expect the Palestinians to call off their uprising.

"The intifada is a human reaction to oppression. You cannot expect someone whom you beat and corner not to respond," he said.

"The Palestinians will stop the intifada when the course of that intifada stops," he said. "People who really want to see the intifada stopping should cooperate with us to convince the Israeli army to withdraw" from the occupied territories.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

PLO to open embassy in Indonesia

JAKARTA (R) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) plans to establish an embassy in Indonesia, PLO official Zehdi Labih Terzi said Friday. Terzi, PLO envoy to the United Nations, told reporters after meeting Foreign Minister Ali Alatas: "We were advised that Indonesia had agreed to establish diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine... on the level of an embassy." Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population, last November formally recognised the independent State of Palestine. "I hope next time I come here, within the shortest possible time, it will be to finalise and set up the embassy of the State of Palestine in Indonesia," Terzi said.

New Sudanese government likely next week

KHARTOUM (R) — A senior member of a key Sudanese party said in remarks published Friday that a new coalition government was likely to be formed next week. Ali Osman Taha, deputy secretary-general of the co-ruling National Islamic Front (NIF) party, said the government would be formed after Monday's scheduled parliamentary vote on a policy statement given by Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi this week. Parliamentary approval of Mahdi's statement is a foregone conclusion since his Umma Party and the militant NIF, main partners in the present coalition, enjoy a majority in the 301-seat house. Taha, whose remarks were published in Al Khartoum daily, said the new government would include all political parties except the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), in opposition since it quit the government last month.

Rebels attack Turkish coal mine

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (R) — Kurdish rebels fighting for autonomy attacked a coal mine in southeastern Turkey, security sources said Friday. They said the 15 rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) destroyed machinery and raked with gunfire a building at the small mine, 30 kilometres from the Iraqi frontier, Thursday night. No casualties were reported. Earlier Thursday, rebels attacked a convoy of six trucks waiting at the frontier to pick up crude oil from Iraq. Two trucks were set ablaze and four were damaged. At least 1,300 people, including many civilians, have been killed since mid-1984 when the PKK launched a campaign to win autonomy for Turkey's estimated eight million Kurds.

Blast damages union office in Ankara

ANKARA (R) — A blast rocked the Ankara branch of Turkey's metal employers union Friday but four officials locked in a room by the attackers were not hurt, police said. The dynamite explosion caused extensive damage to union offices in a nine-storey business and trade centre in the main Kizilay district at 9.00 a.m. (0700 GMT).

Hopes of imminent hostage release fade

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Hopes of an imminent release of British hostages in Lebanon were fading Friday and a local radio station said the expected move was "mere speculation based on rumours."

"Reports of an imminent hostage release appeared to be mere speculation based on rumours," the Voice of the Nation radio station, based in west Beirut, said.

British embassy spokesman Antoine Haddad told the Associated Press: "We still have no hard information." He would not comment further.

Hana Naja, an employee of the Irish embassy's consular section in west Beirut, said Irish Amba-

sador to Lebanon Patrick McCabe, who is based in Baghdad, would arrive in west Beirut Saturday evening to investigate the rumours.

"We don't have new information," she said.

The rumours that have buzzed Beirut since Wednesday afternoon spoke of an imminent release within 72 hours of John McCarthy, a journalist, and Brian Keenan, a teacher who also holds Irish citizenship.

McCarthy, 32, of Barnet, north London, a producer for the London-based Worldwide Television News Agency, was kidnapped April 17, 1986, as he drove to Beirut airport for a flight to

Keenan, 38, of Ormeau Road, Belfast, was kidnapped April 11, 1986, as he walked to the American University of Beirut where he held a teaching post.

No group has claimed the abduction of either McCarthy or Keenan, who are among 15 Westerners missing in Lebanon and believed held by pro-Iranian extremists.

The others are nine Americans, a Belgian, an Italian and two other Britons.

Previous releases of hostages in Lebanon were preceded by communications from the kidnappers. No such statements regarding Keenan or McCarthy were reported in recent days.

The rumours in Beirut were

coupled with a report in the London-based Arabic newspaper Al Hayat that discussions were underway between Iran and "countries involved" to secure Keenan's release.

The Voice of Lebanon radio station, based in east Beirut, also reported Thursday that the two British hostages would be released soon.

Irish Foreign Minister Brian Lenihan met his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Velayati in Paris earlier this month during an international conference.

Irish Ambassador to Syria Declan Connolly, who is based in Saudi Arabia, met with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaf in Damascus Wednesday.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION Tel: 73111-19		PRAYER TIMES 19:15 La Vie En Pance 19:30 News in Hebrew 20:00 News in Arabic 20:30 Growing Pains 21:00 Alfred Hitchcock 21:30 Saturday Variety Show 22:00 News in English 22:30 Feature film: "The Dead of Jericho"		CHURCHES Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785 St. Joseph Church, Tel. 624590 Church of the Annunciation, Tel. 637440 De la Salle Church, Tel. 661757		WEATHER Bullein supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Clouds increase gradually and scattered rain is expected. Winds will be northeasterly moderate. In Agaba, it will be partly cloudy with a chance for		USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS AMMAN: Dr. Youssef Sammour 615648 Dr. Mohammad Abu Mahfouz 753444 Dr. Youssef Saeedat 621311 Dr. Abdul Aziz Abu Khalaf 661522 Firas pharmacy 661912 Ferdows pharmacy 783336 Al Asema pharmacy 637053 Nairook pharmacy 623672		EMERGENCIES Civil Defence Department 661111 Civil Defence Immediate 630341 Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777 Fire Brigade 62209093 Blood Bank 775121 Highway Police 643402 Traffic Police 65639091 Public Security Department 656000 / 685111 Hotel Complaints 608800 Price Complaints 661176		HOSPITALS AMMAN: Hussein Medical Centre 81381332 Khaldi Maternity, J. Ann 642816 Alkhal Maternity, J. Ann 642412 Jabal Amman Maternity 642362 Malhas, J. Amman 636140		MARKET PRICES Upper/lower price in fils per kg. Apple 300 / 450 Apple (yellow) 450 / 400		PALESTINE, SHMEISANI Palestine, Shmeisani 664171/4 Shmeisani Hospital 669131 University Hospital 845046 Al-Musabir Hospital 667227 The Islamic, Abdali 66612737 Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646 Italian, Al-Muhajreen 7771013 Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 77511326 Army, Mar 89161115 Queen Alia Hospital 60224050 Amal Hospital 674155 ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323 Zarqa National Hospital (09)991071 Ibn Sina Hospital (09)98732 IRABID: Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555 Greek Catholic Hospital (02)27275 Ibn Al Nalees Hospital (02)347100 AQABA: Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111		BAHAMA (MUKAMMAM) Banana 350 / 300 Beans 300 / 250 Broad beans 700 / 600 Cabbage 750 / 650 Carrots 150 / 100 Cauliflower 250 / 200 Cucumbers 400 / 380 Dates 600 / 500 Eggplant 140 / 100 Garlic 280 / 200 Grapefruit 170 / 120 Lemon 210 / 160 Lettuce (per one) 280 / 200 Marrow (large) 380 / 300 Marrow (small) 350 / 300 Orange (French) 400 / 340 Orange (Shamouti) 250 / 200 Onion (green) 200 / 150 Onion (dry) 220 / 160 Pepper (hot) 460 / 400 Pepper (sweet) 460 / 400 Potato 250 / 200 Spinach 120 / 80 Mandarin 270 / 200 Tomatoes 180 / 120	
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Queen Noor takes part in tree planting celebrations

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Thursday took part in tree planting celebrations organised by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) at Yadoudeh district south of Amman.

The Queen planted trees along with senior officials and a large number of local residents at a site which the society is turning into a large forest in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture.

In a speech delivered at the ceremony, the society President Anis Muasher said that the RSCN was going ahead with plans to plant more forests on lands unsuitable for agriculture with the help of the Ministry of Agriculture which supplies the saplings and other requirements.

The president urged the private organisations, voluntary societies and citizens to join the national efforts and the society's endeavours to plant more trees and help green Jordan by the year 2000.

He said the society has already planted five forests in a number of regions around the capital.

Among those attending the ceremony was Ministry of Agriculture Secretary General Salem Al Lawzi.

Other tree planting celebrations took place Thursday at the Tlaa Al Ali, Umm Al Summaq, Khilda, Sweileh and Zahran districts within the Amman region.



Her Majesty Queen Noor and members of the Royal Family Thursday plant a tree at Yadoudeh

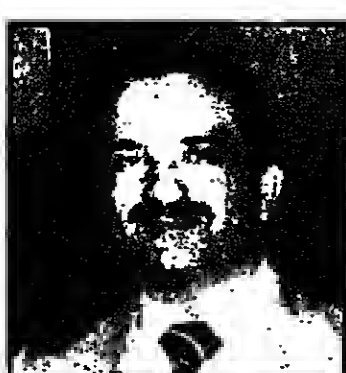
Heads of local councils and representatives of public and private organisations. A spokesman for the Greater Amman Municipality said that more than 25,000 saplings of fruit and forest trees were planted during the celebrations which were organised by the Amman Municipality.

Crown Prince meets Jordanian students in U.K.

LONDON (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, who is currently on a visit to the United Kingdom, met Thursday with Jordanian students studying in British universities, and reviewed with them economic and educational policies in Jordan.

The Prince spoke about the present stage which requires adjustment to the current circumstances and the endeavours to stimulate the national economy in the light of the prevailing situation in the Arab World.

Prince Hassan said that Jordan



HRH Crown Prince Hassan

believes in the potential, as well as the creative and inventive skills of its young generation, and is keen on dealing with their issues in Jordan and abroad.

Prince Hassan also spoke on His Majesty King Hussein's current efforts on the Arab and international levels to serve Arab causes.

Jordanian and Egyptian businessmen to meet Monday

By Zaid Al Shilleh
Al Rai Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian and Egyptian businessmen will hold a meeting Monday at Al Uqsur in Egypt to discuss the role of the private sector in developing economic relations, and possibilities for setting up joint investment projects.

The two sides will also discuss means of supporting the joint Jordanian-Egyptian-Iraqi Land Bridge, and the projects proposed by the joint Jordanian-Egyptian Company for Investments and Development.

Mamdouh Abu Hassan, chairman of the Jordanian Businessmen's Association, and head of the Jordanian delegation to the meetings, said that economic cooperation between Jordan and Egypt could serve as a model for the pan-Arab economic cooperation. "Arab economic cooperation will contribute to enhancing the Arab World's position and enable it to compete with the world economic blocs."

Speaking about the 4th session of the Jordanian-Egyptian businessmen, Abu Hassan said it

aimed at encouraging investment and setting up joint economic projects benefiting both the peoples of Jordan and Egypt.

Abu Hassan also said that the two sides to the meetings will discuss means of cooperation in implementing the equal commercial deal between both countries.

Participants will also discuss a number of projects proposed and studied by the Jordanian-Egyptian Investment Company. These projects include the production of meat, fish, potatoes and fodder.

Taking part in the meetings will be 80 Jordanian and Egyptian businessmen in addition to senior government officials from both sides, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

MADABA SOCIAL SERVICES: Madaba Mayor Ahmad Otaish said social service centres established in Madaba, Ma'in, Hishan, and Malih, in association with the Queen Alia Jordan Social Welfare Fund (QAF), adopted programmes designed to teach and rehabilitate women, and to provide special care for babies and mothers. This was implemented through holding lectures and activities in various fields. (Petra)

DHIBAN CHILDREN'S PARK: Efforts are underway to finish the children's park project in Dhiban sub-district. The project costs JD 6,000. (Petra)

Hanania reviews institution's programmes

NMI to make drastic reforms in hospitals, build new ones

By Suhair Obaidat
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The National Medical Institution (NMI) is working on a long-term plan to meet the Kingdom's medical requirements until the year 2,000 and this requires building new hospitals and conducting drastic reforms the existing ones, NMI Director General Daoud Hanania said Thursday.

Jordan's population is expected to grow into 4.7 million in 11 years, making it imperative on the NMI to take such measures, Hanania said at a press conference in which he reviewed the institution's plans and programmes.

The creation of the NMI, Hanania said, came upon the directives of His Majesty King Hussein, with the purpose of improving the standards of hospitals in the Kingdom and promoting the medical services for all the citizens.

Before the NMI was established, Hanania pointed out, the hospital system in the public sector was managed by three different organisations; the Armed Forces, the Health Ministry and the University of Jordan. "These organisations worked independently from each other to a very large extent."

"Therefore, there was independent planning, budget and training, not to mention separate administrative structures and procedures. This naturally led to varying standards and duplication of services, and most importantly to an increase in medical expenditure," Hanania said.

So, in the past year, he added, "we have been involved in wide ranging efforts to find ways and means of coordination to reach our goals of unified health care standards."

Though the NMI is financially and administratively independent,

it coordinates with the Health Ministry and the University of Jordan on a day to day basis. According to Hanania, the organisational procedures are devised so that the private sector can reorganise itself.

The administrative structure of the NMI directorate was formed and approved by the board of regents, incorporating several innovative ideas, such as a consultative council composed of the head of disciplines of various specialties, to help the NMI in forming a planning policy for the

various specialties, including training, equipment and upgrading services.

The training of management personnel was a major flaw in our system, so the department in charge would handle, in a very detailed manner, the training of hospital workers, physicians, nurses, dental officers, pharmacists and other allied health workers, both inside and outside the country," Hanania said.

"Similarly, the development of a management information system is already under way. Our planning group, following extensive and detailed surveys of our hospitals, have produced clear ideas of the budgetary requirements in the short and long terms to see how the individual citizen is affected by all this," he added.

In the meantime there will be no increase in the health care provision, despite the fact that there will be an increase in expenditure because of the reform

being implemented in the system.

The NMI is responsible for all beneficiaries of the military and civil insurance schemes, and its specialised hospitals (King Hussein Medical Centre and the Jordan University Hospital) are serving the people referred to them from the medical centres of the Health Ministry, through directives formulated by the ministry and the NMI. The transfer of patients, caused by either lack of beds, grade or specialty is now possible and easier, Hanania said.

"Queen Alia Hospital, which is a highly developed hospital, is considered an alternative for military personnel," Hanania added.

The NMI, with an estimated budget of JD 52 million, will create a residency programme and fellowships in order to upgrade the performance of the health care system.



National Medical Institute Director General Daoud Hanania Thursday speaks at press conference on the plans and programmes of the institution (Petra photo)

UDD distributes 75 housing units in Ruseifa

ZARQA (J.T.) — The Urban Development Department (UDD) Thursday distributed 75 housing units to beneficiaries in the Ruseifa housing estate which is being built in stages.

UDD Director Hisham Al Zagha who supervised the distribution process said that the three-stage project, which will cost JD 3.665 million, includes two schools, a community centre, a vocational training centre, a health clinic and an emergency and first aid unit, as well as a shopping area.

In the coming week the UDD will distribute more units built in the course of implementing the first stage of the project, but those units of the second and third stages will be distributed in the coming two months, Zagha noted.

Later, Zagha attended a tree planting celebration at the Marka housing estate and, in a statement to Al Rai newspaper later, he

said that the Marka housing estate includes 600 units complete with basic services and a good network of roads, schools, community and health centres.

The UDD has received 1,500 applications from members of the public to benefit from the units in Marka, but they will be distributed to families with less than JD 200 monthly income, Zagha said.

Work on the project had begun in 1986 and the UDD has just received the first phase while the second and final stage will be

ready by July this year, Zagha noted.

At present the UDD is carrying out a major housing project of 1,400 units at Umm Nuwwara (Qweismeh), south east of Am-

man, the UDD director added. He said that the project will be ready by early 1990 and the beneficiaries will have to pay 10 per cent of the total cost which will be spread over several years.

SUPPLY COUNCIL MEMBERS: The cabinet has endorsed the appointment of Mohammad Asfour, Khaled Abu Hassan, Khaled Darwazeh, and Toujan Faisal as members of the Supply Council for two years. (Petra)

530 FAMILIES RECEIVE AID: The National Aid Fund office in Karak Governorate presented aid to 530 needy families in November and December. The aid amounted to JD 21,340. (Petra)

Jordan, Iraq discuss sulphur exports via Aqaba

AMMAN (Petra, J.T.) — The director of the Iraqi sulphur establishment met here Thursday with Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Khaled Al Haj Hassan to review the process of transporting Iraqi sulphur to Aqaba for export via the port city.

The Iraqi official, Abdul Sattar Al Safi voiced his government's appreciation to the Jordanian government for the facilities provided for the export process.

He said so far Iraq has exported 104,350 tonnes of sulphur through the Aqaba Port and nearly 400,000 tonnes are expected to be exported during 1989.

Iraq also exports oil products and imports goods through Aqaba.

At present, the number of trucks commuting between Aqaba and Baghdad is 12,500, altogether transporting up to 35,000 tonnes of goods.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- * An exhibition of works by Contemporary Arab Artists at Al Wasiti Art Gallery.
- * A plastic art exhibition by Egyptian artist Yassin Ibrahim Mohammad at the Housing Bank Gallery.
- * An exhibition of photographic works by Wols (Otto Wolfgang Schulz) at the Goethe Institute.
- * The Jordanian plastic art season which includes a general exhibition of works by Jordanian artists at the Professional Association Complex in Irbid.
- * An art exhibition by artist Misa Erder at the Petra Bank Gallery.
- * A photography exhibition entitled "Under Pure Skies" exhibiting 100 19th century photographs of the Middle East at the Royal Cultural Centre — 5:30 p.m.

FORUM

- * The Arabic-German literature forum at the Goethe Institute — 7:00 p.m.

LITERARY EVENING

- * A literary evening by Munira Shureih at Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation — 6:00 p.m.

Shobak castle — home of the only Ayyubid palace

SHOBAK Castle is one of the Jordan's best-known monuments. Located a few kilometres north of the town of Nijil, it is easily reached by visitors approaching Petra from the north. The castle stands on the summit of a steep hill close to the crest of the Wadi Arah. The dense labyrinth of architectural remains within the fortress walls are most commonly associated with the Crusader period, for the castle was initially built by a Frankish army. Yet upon closer examination of the ruins and the historical texts it is clear that the site was occupied continuously from the 12th century until the 20th century and represents one of the most significant ruins of the late Islamic period in Jordan.

Shobak, founded in 1115-6 A.D. by Baldwin I the ruler of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, was the primary fortress within the Crusader defences of Outre-Jordan, or Trans-Jordan. The short-lived Crusader presence in southern Jordan ended in 1189 when the army of the Ayyubid General Salahuddin conquered the fortress and established Ayyubid rule in the region.

Various Ayyubid princes held Shobak within their territories until the Mamluk conquest of Trans-Jordan in 1262. During the Mamluk period the castle continued to play an important role in local defence, though the relative peace of the era enabled the town of Shobak (probably located on the site of the present village of Jaya) to prosper as well.

With the Ottoman conquest of the Levant in 1517 Shobak became a garrison post on the frontier of this large empire. On several occasions the local tribes forced the garrison to retreat to Palestine and in the 17th century the Ottomans seem to have abandoned the castle. By the end of the 19th century the tribes were once again subjected by Ottoman troops during the re-establishment of the garrison. By 1918, at the close of the Great Arab Revolt, the Ottomans were defeated for the last time and the castle became a village refuge for local bedouin and peasant tribes.

The architectural remnants preserved at Shobak attest to each of these occupations. Among the major monuments are the Crusader Church and Chapel; an Ayyubid Palace; and the large defensive towers from the Mamluk period. Evidence of the Ottoman garrison presence is mainly noted in the reuse of earlier structures whereas numerous stone houses used by villagers during the Ottoman period until some 30-50 years ago are scattered across the site.

The Shobak Archaeological Project conducted a preliminary season during August 1986. The purpose of this campaign was to conduct excavations and an architectural study of the site. The work was concentrated in the Ayyubid Palace Complex although additional soundings were located west of the Crusader Church.

The most conclusive data were gathered from the palace complex where four phases of occupation were encountered. Phase I consisted of the foundations and initial occupation of the Ayyubid Palace and Phase II pertains to architectural reconstructions carried out later in the Ayyubid period.

Reoccupation was attested in the Phase III Mamluk stratum, as well as in the Phase IV remains from the Ottoman period. Architectural features predating the construction of the palace were also encountered. While more clarification is needed to determine the specific phasing of these components, it appears that both



Shobak Castle

Nabataean and Crusader elements are present beneath the palace foundations.

Historical documents demonstrate that at least three Ayyubid rulers carried out constructions at the site, yet the texts do not specifically refer to the palace.

Nevertheless it appears that

the palace was built by Al Mu'azzam 'Isa Ibn Al 'Adil who governed Shobak from 1197-1226.

This prince, who was appointed Sultan of Damascus in 1218, was exceptional among the Ayyubid lords of Shobak. He was noted for numerous constructions at the

site, which he surrounded with beautiful gardens. Thus, it can be suggested that Al Mu'azzam 'Isa built the palace as his personal residence, before assuming the Damascene Sultanate.

The structure is unique in that it is the only Ayyubid palace in Jordan.

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Step in the right direction

THE ON-GOING negotiations between Egypt, Iraq, North Yemen and Jordan to form a common market between them must be the talk of the Arab World. When these negotiations come to fruition as expected they will offer the Arab peoples the best news ever for a long time to come. Above all, such a projected sub-regional Arab common market would signal the end of the stage of talks for the sake of talks at the beginning of a new era in inter-Arab relations that would usher ever more action-oriented steps and measures leading to an overall Arab common market. It is true the tensions of the negotiations to affect a limited Arab common market, linking just four Arab states at this initial stage, are not as ambitious as the Arab peoples would like to see. The calls of Arab nationalism would not rest until total Arab economic and political unity is achieved. Aiming for such an ambitious objective in one leap may be frustrating that dream. That is why it would be more prudent to proceed one step at a time till that final giant step taken. It is the ardent hope of every citizen of the four Arab countries joining now in a mini common market that their Arab countries would become organically linked with each other in the kind of a generic Arab common market that would stand the test of time and meet the imminent expectation coming its way from other regional common markets proliferating the international scene. There is no doubt from the conclusion that the world is witnessing the rise of many regional united fronts, both economic and political, and it is high time that the Arab World begin this process in order to be able to meet the stiff competitive edge of this new phenomenon. It is with great satisfaction and pride that the Arab World saw the nucleus of such an Arab economic common markets begin in the Arab region in the form of the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1971. Concurrently with the four Mashreq countries' talks the formation of their own embryonic common market, there are also on-going talks between the Maghreb Arab countries of North Africa with a view of creating the same objective between them. And when all these major sub-regional Arab common markets begin to flex their economic and in turn political muscles there is no telling where their respective scope and jurisdiction would end. For all the Arab peoples affected by such sub-regional common markets would very much like to see Syria, Jordan and all the other Arab states, including hopefully Palestine, become integrated parts of this whole process. At an early stage there is nothing that would please Jordan more than to see Syria joining in the effort to realise part of Arab dream by becoming an early partner in Egyptian, Iraqi, North Yemeni, and Jordanian projected common market.

ARABIC PRESS EDITORIALS

The formation of an Arab economic group, grouping Egypt, Jordan, North Yemen and Iraq was the theme of Al Ra'i Arabic editorial Friday. The idea which was highlighted by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in a statement to the press on Friday, had originally been advocated by His Majesty King Hussein to serve side by side with the grouping of Arab countries in the Maghreb region, and thus consolidate inter-Arab political and economic stances. The paper said, indeed there will be no doubt in the world for weak nations in the light of the formation of economic groupings in Europe and other parts of the world. The paper added, the paper said that any grouping of Arab states in the Mashreq will be open for other Arab countries to join in, will enhance further the Arab Nation's potential. The notion of this grouping, the paper concluded would no doubt form a new era for the Arabs and a new and stronger status among world nations.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily tackles the prospect of forming a mini Arab delegation, grouping states in confrontation with the Arabist state for the coming international Middle East peace conference. Mahmoud Rimawi says that this will be a practical step, but it has to be well prepared through contacts and consultations. The writer notes that Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine are the most concerned parties in the Palestine question and therefore they ought to form one group to negotiate the future of the region through an international conference which must also be attended by representatives of major nations of the world. The writer says that the slight improvement in relations between Cairo and Damascus can bear indications for a prospective action in this respect, since, at all, the Arabs are all in the same boat, facing a common problem and a common enemy.

Dustour daily newspaper dwelt on King Hussein's visit to Cairo this week with President Hosni Mubarak. The two leaders who journeyed Thursday that they were working hand in hand to serve the national interest, sounded very optimistic about the future, in view of the positive developments witnessed in the Arab world represented in the end of the Gulf war and the world-wide support for the Palestinian uprising, the paper noted. It said that by the time the King meets with Mubarak, the outcome proves encouraging and fruitful, simply because the two leaders are dedicating their time and efforts to serve their Arab nation. This fruitful relationship, the paper added, is now poised to achieve further steps conducive to a stronger and more consolidated Arab world.

Al Shaah daily said that King Hussein's talks with the Saudi Egyptian leaders were aimed at serving the Arab higher interests. Building a unified Arab stand and enhancing the authority of the Arab Nation is no doubt behind the King's recent tour, simply because the King has been calling for a joint effort by the Arab Nation in dealing with the common challenges. The paper said. It said that the coming Arab summit will be a right step for the Arabs where they can pool their efforts and their resources for the benefit of the Arab Nation.

By Yasmin Alibhai

THE DEEPER implications of 1992 and the Single European Act are, and should be, causing real trepidation. "We are not looking to the future hopefully," said Tara Mukherjee, chairman of the Confederation of Indian Organisations, recently. "If 1992 means a reassertion of the worst elements of white history, we are lost. As non-white Europeans, we must fight and take up our rightful position in the vanguard of the new Europe and we will." It is not the usual clinging to the status quo which is producing these fears. Nor is it the destructive parochialism of many British. The worry is that there is a respectable xenophobia mushrooming all over the continent that is pushing some of the collective dreams for 1992 to cluster around a concept of Europe which is white, racist and much more powerful than any post-war individual state.

Professor Chris Mulla, head of ethnic studies at the University of Amsterdam, puts it this way. "The states in Europe are fiercely nationalistic. What 1992 represents is a transformation of nationalism into a white continentalism, altogether more tight, resilient, and with more power." Conceivable primarily as an economic union, he believes, the European Community now needs a firmer coherence if it is to establish some kind of real presence in the future, particularly with changed global relationships. A reaffirmation of pre-war attitudes towards the Third World, and a self-image of superiority may well be the glue that is needed for the bonding. One way of triggering off such a frenzy of togetherness would be to create the image of demons at the door.

A more sophisticated way, though, is to assert the existence of a shared European ethnic identity, emanating from a common Graeco-Roman tradition. This is the current talk of many right wingers who claim that the core culture which runs through the backbone of Europe needs to be nurtured and protected from alien influences. The trouble is that the unity of Europe in the past had little in common with this cosy image. The European nations often detested each other. Such a bond as did exist was external — a common sense of their superiority over the rest of the world and their right to exploit it.

The post-war experience did much to sap this arrogance, but only temporarily. But the hubris is now reemerging, with a vengeance. Mrs. Thatcher's speech at Bruges last year marks this important reassertion. Finger on the pulse as usual, she said: "From our perspective today, surely what strikes us most is our common experience. For instance, the story of how Europeans explored and colonised and —

yes, without apology — civilised much of the world is an extraordinary tale to talent, skill and courage." She also made a strong assertion that Europe was Christian.

All this, therefore, raises a central and neglected question: Where do non-white Europeans fall within such a vision?

Even those non-whites who are already part of the nation states — immigrants, migrants, their offspring — fall outside what those countries perceive as "desirable" citizens. Otherwise it would not have been possible to pass the kind of racist legislation which so many countries in Europe — Britain, Belgium, France and the Netherlands among them — have been adopting over the last ten years. In terms of numbers, the people affected by such laws as the British Nationality Act remain very small. Their importance is symbolic, pushing the notion that "aliens" do not belong, are unwelcome, and need serious control.

So, as Europe moves towards some kind of integrated vision, what happens to these indoor colonialists, who have at the moment (quite justifiably) no sense that it is their Europe, whose disenchantment and horror increases with time, whose children face more and not less racism, and who are not prepared to be the lowest of the low any more? Non-whites could indeed be a destructive force in the process of the "unification" of Europe. For a start, few of them could psychologically participate in the reconstruction of the myth of a superior whiteness and give it unconditional loyalty. Peregrine Worsthorne has already argued that their allegiance "may be with the enemies of the West, namely the Third World."

The New Right tries to deal with this in two ways. First, by talking unashamedly about the universal human need for "separate development" (a speech by the deputy Minister of Justice in the Netherlands put forward this apartheid ideology recently). Second, and if all else fails, by taking a severe assimilationist line to submerge "alienness". Successful black Thatcherites are already being sucked into the fast stream in this country.

Non-white citizens living in Europe are therefore already feeling uneasy about their future, and the ever popular sport taken up by the politicians and bureaucrats of keeping out the Third World, is unlikely to reassure them that they are valued members of the community, or that they could create a different vision for 1992, especially as the use of paranoia to achieve unity is gaining momentum.

The messages ringing out are that more people from the Third World are gathering — like vermin — at the hitherto vulnerable

doors of affluent Europe, and that being only vermin, they do not require the human rights, freedom and democracy upon which Western Europe has been built. The Greeks used the same old divisions. Civilised values applied to civilised people and not to those they defined as barbarians.

Thus are two central but conflicting traditions sewn together. On the one hand, there is the Europe that has meant the hegemony of white people, the metaphor of whiteness, the whiteness that, as Franz Fanon says, burns you. On the other, there is an equally strong but admirable tradition of egalitarian universalism devoted to the preservation of human rights, a tradition that acquired real meaning after the defeat of fascism. Agreement over these fundamental issues produced supranational treaties to protect these rights. Western Europe became the haven for those facing inhuman persecution. That Europe no longer exists — at least not for undesirable intruders from the Third World. Of course there is still a lot of romance about fleeing Czech winters.

This Zeitgeist of intolerance is seeping all over the continent. In the European Parliament recently, a French MEP Michel Collinot said that family unification was "an incitement to the massive settlement of Third World populations on European soil." A British MEP, Andrew Pearce, added: "We will find that parts of our member states become almost like foreign countries where we have foreign culture imposed on our society not merely adding to the variety of cultures to our community." An unpublished 1987 Runnymede Trust report on Belgium states: "Before... discriminatory practices and the justification of discriminatory treatment were large-

ly condemned by the authorities. This is no longer the case." Even in Denmark, the moral line is giving way to the tough line.

The dilemma is that Europe still needs some of the labour of the Third World, particularly with the economic explosions going on all over the West and expected demographic changes in the near future. According to Professor Robin Cohen of Warwick University, these requirements are now carefully categorised according to changing economic needs.

The most privileged group are the citizens (people with permanent rights), followed by denizens (people with legal status of a temporary nature) and, at the bottom, the helots, undocumented workers with no rights. The situation for this group is likely to get much worse under the increased labour flexibility that will come about after 1992.

A further, and growing, category that is giving white Europeans paroxysms is the rise in the number of Third World refugees. The extreme prejudice towards these people most clearly and disturbingly exposes how ethnocentric, hardline, and unprincipled White Europe is becoming. Philip Rudge, the General Secretary for European Consultation on Refugees and Exiles, has said: "Traditionally, European human rights policy was developed in order to defend the rights of the weak, the vulnerable. Does the 1992 act now mean that we are now talking about a human rights policy that is guaranteeing the liberties of the strong, the powerful and the prosperous?"

This new definition is being cultivated against the backcloth of an alarmist numbers game. Europe, in fact, takes in less than 5 per cent of the total world refugee population. In 1986, for

example, 135,000 refugees were admitted into Britain — 0.24 per cent of the population. Sudan, a country of equivalent size, took in 1,164,000 refugees — 3.61 per cent of its total population. The myth that there are millions of false refugees at the door cannot be sustained by the facts. But because the scale and nature of the movement is so poorly understood, it has been possible to manipulate the issue and play on public fears.

In Britain, goal posts have been changed and moved. The right of appeal has been eroded and interventions by MPs are severely restricted. The 1951 Geneva Convention is being interpreted in a much more narrow way. Post-war European refugees were admitted on the basis that they were victims of generalised persecution. Now refugee status is being denied to those people from Sri Lanka who are making the same claims. In Germany the danger of having to anticipate torture in the country of origin does not constitute grounds for asylum.

Shifts to the extreme right in internal politics are also exerting an influence. France's Le Pen is the obvious example. There is also a growth in new fascist networks. Van Steen of the Belgian National Front has been quoted saying he wants a "Free White Europe". The unthinkable is soon turned into vote-catching slogans. The resonance is palpable.

And if the present is bad, then the future could be even worse. That is because the European structure will be more powerful and capable of strong concerted action. There is already a dangerous connection being made at high levels between drug traffickers, criminals, terrorists, prostitutes, immigrants and refugees. The Trevi group consisting of interior and justice ministers

from the EEC and other countries, including the US and Canada, now meets regularly. A Home Office spokesman admitted that there had been Trevi discussions about border controls, "terrorists, immigrants, other undesirable and a common refugee policy." The non-governmental agencies around Europe who work in the field now fear that unless there is powerful lobbying, future common immigration and refugee policies will involve a levelling downwards towards the least liberal line. That is why the newly formed network Migreuropa was established, bringing together migrant and refugee groups and an anti-racist consortium. They want to see a different new Europe enshrined in the symbolism of 1992.

Philip Rudge has faith in such initiatives. "1992 must not be about institutionalised selfishness, and a reinforcement of that outdated European superior culture," he says. Others, like Bhiku Parekh of the Commission of Racial Equality see the future more optimistically, if only because the past has been so bad. Last June a European Commission resolution recognised this change, by stating that the fight against racism and xenophobia was at the centre of the search for a new European identity as the community moves towards integration. Actions have not so far matched up to these ideals. This will be the real challenge of the 1992 act. As Philip Rudge puts it, "The acid test is going to be whether this is something internationalist and bigger than its composite parts — or whether it is an accumulation of chauvinisms."

Yasmin Alibhai is editor of the New Statesman and Society's race and society supplement. This article is reprinted from the British newspaper, The Guardian.

South Sudan faces new threat of famine

By Hamza Hendawi
Reuters

KHARTOUM — Famine that killed tens of thousands in south Sudan last year could strike again even if efforts to end a civil war succeeded, said foreign diplomats and relief officials here.

They said a new cycle of death from starvation and disease had begun in some areas, while in others people might be preparing to leave their villages in search of food.

"Even an immediate ceasefire will not be the end of the problem," said Christopher Carr, chief administrator in Sudan of the French charity Medecins Sans Frontieres.

"Most of the roads are mined by the (Sudan People's Liberation Army) rebels and there are

bandits looking for loot almost everywhere," he said.

At least three million Sudanese have fled their homes to avoid the five-year old war. Together with flooding and drought, famine has racked the mainly subsistence farming region.

Relief officials in Khartoum said that without an immediate ceasefire they would not be able to send enough food to the south before rains due in March cut the roads.

Diplomats said the war might escalate following a parliament vote last month of a peace plan agreed in November by rebel leader John Garang and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

Parliament adopted another plan proposed by Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi. The DUP quit

the ruling coalition in protest and the SPLA rejected the plan.

Press reports in Khartoum this month have said 15 people were dying of hunger in Malakal every day.

Tens of thousands died in the south last year and relief officials say many others may have perished in remote war-torn regions.

The ICRC began relief operations on December 4 after nearly a year of laborious negotiations won approval from both the SPLA and the government.

Disputes over how to operate, jealousies and in some cases inefficiency among donor countries and relief organisations are likely to hinder their efforts, diplomats said.

"It all boils down to politics pure and simple," said a foreign

relief official seconded to the government's relief and rehabilitation commission.

Private relief agencies say donated food often finds its way to the black market or the tables of people who do not need it.

Some relief officials are concerned that an airlift by the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) to the southern town of Aweil has not been approved by the SPLA.

The SPLA has threatened in the past to shoot down planes flying without its permission. It has approved an ICRC airlift to Aweil.

"If the rebels shoot down the UNDP plane, the ICRC operation will certainly go down with it," said the director of a major relief operation in Khartoum.

West Germans protest at rightist party

By Mark Heinrich
Reuters

BONN — West Germany's postal service is under fire for delivering the message of an extreme rightist fringe party to 24 million households.

Offended citizens have abused mailmen and deluged post offices by returning unwanted letters from the Deutsche Volksunion (DVU), or German People's Union, that have turned up in post boxes in recent days.

The DVU mailing contains a form letter addressed to "Dear citizens" from Gerhard Frey, the party's chairman and a wealthy publisher, urging them to back its candidates for the European Parliament elections in June.

Frey charges that West German interests are being sacrificed to the European Community and rails against the cost and social pressures of accommodating "a

foreigner influx."

"Some postmen (delivering the letters) have been called 'Nazi swine', especially in areas where mainly foreigners live," said Wolfgang Schmidt, postal spokesman in Dusseldorf.

"We're getting many hundreds of phone calls from people complaining about the mailing. The outrage in the population is palpable," said Hans Martens of the post office in Hamburg.

The postal service made 3.2 million marks (\$1.72 million) from the DVU's direct-mail drive, but the financial gain has been eclipsed by the uproar over the message.

Post and telecommunications ministry lawyers checked the DVU's mailing beforehand but found no cause to refuse delivery because the party was not advocating anything illegal.

"That does not mean we agree with the contents. But we cannot act as censors. Our regulations are based on law, not politics," spokeswoman Barbara Schagen told Reuters.

However, the postal service is now re-examining its rules to determine whether such mailings could be prevented in future. Post Minister Christian Schwarz-Schilling told parliament on January 18.

Schagen said that while the DVU material benefited from the looser rules for mailed advertising because it was addressed to no one by name, it was sent in a sealed envelope "giving the impression of a letter with a personal character."

Postal union officials and a wide spectrum of politicians have bemoaned the use of the mail to spread the message.

Enclosed in the letter is an opinion survey that is to be returned, along with a donation, to party headquarters in Munich.

The poll, with "yes" or "no" answers to be checked off, poses such questions as:

Should "pseudo-asylum seekers and foreign criminals" be expelled? Should German job-seekers be preferred over foreigners? Should foreigners be restricted?

Should EC membership for Turkey and access for more millions of Turks to Germany be rejected? Should reunification of Germany take precedence over expansion of the EC?

The mailing also includes a subscription form for Frey's three newspapers, including the Deutsche National-Zeitung.

"First Germany — then Europe" is the DVU's slogan. The party was founded in 1987.

Burma faces uncertain future

By Denis D. Gray
The Associated Press

TAUNGGYI, Burma — At a news conference intended to convince foreign journalists that Burma's military junta was dealing magnanimously with dissidents, a student leader suddenly challenged an army officer.

It was not true, shouted Myo Win Htin, that students attacked troops in Taunggyi during last year's pro-democracy demonstrations as the officer claimed. It was the army that fired into crowds, killing students in their early teens, he asserted amid applause from his colleagues.

This outburst appeared to reflect what many Burmese say is a defiant mood and a widespread smoldering hatred of Burma's powerful military, which had turned its guns on students, Buddhist monks and others agitating for an end to 26 years of authoritarian rule.

The deep rift in Burmese society, with its potential for renewed violence, is but one of a host of problems facing this impoverished nation now shunned by the international community.

"The current situation is complex. The future is bleak and uncertain," said one Burmese journalist.

Although the military crushed

the uprising last September, it has promised general elections and allowed more than 180 political parties to register. It has also attempted to woo the population by sweeping streets, whitewashing pagodas and providing basic commodities to the poor at special stores.

Many Burmese have reacted to such moves with derision and are watching the powerholders for signs of meaningful change.

"If they are no elections, we will demonstrate again," student Aung Myint Soe told reporters in the town of Loikaw. "We have not given up the struggle for democracy."

Such critical statements, made in the presence of officials during a recent three-day visit by 46 foreign journalists, would have been unthinkable prior to the upheaval. Possibly fearful of another revolt, the military rulers are allowing more freedom of expression than in the days of retired strongman Ne Win.

Although clearly designed to improve Rangoon's greatly tarnished human rights image, the visit by journalists also was unprecedented in a country that had virtually barred all foreign reporters and seemed to care little for outside opinion.

"We are moving toward an

open society. We need foreign businessmen, investors. And of course journalists must come," said one official accompanying the press trip.

However, the new leaders stress that change must come slowly and view the brutal repression last year as the military elite exercising its rightful role in saving the country from "unpatriotic and destructive elements."

"Every country controls mobs. And if they refuse to act according to the law, you shoot them," said one senior military officer.

Four months after the coup by Gen. Saw Maung and the establishment of a state law and order restoration council, a curfew remains in force along with a ban on public gatherings and tight control over mass media. With the exception of nursery schools, the country's educational system has been closed down for more than a year.

Saw Maung has spurred calls for dialogue by opposition party leaders and rejected one of their major platforms — reconciliation with a dozen ethnic minority insurgent groups that have been battling the government for decades. Instead, the Rangoon military has mounted a major campaign against one of the strongest rebel groups, the Karen National Union, and is using up

what little foreign currency it earns from the sale of teak and fish to buy guns and bullets.

Burma's long-suffering economy plummeted last year in the wake of massive destruction of state factories and infrastructure and an aid boycott by an international community outraged by human rights abuses. A number of Western analysts say a further deterioration of living standards could reignite protest as surely as negation of political freedoms.

"An economic revival under current conditions is almost impossible. The economy just manages to keep breathing," says one knowledgeable Burmese.

The flow of funds from Japan, West Germany, the United States and other past aid donors — which totalled as much as \$500 million in some past years — has ceased, and a number of development projects are frozen. Washington, Tokyo and the European Economic Community continue to show their displeasure with Saw Maung; the ambassadors of those nations were all absent from Burma's Independence Day celebrations Jan. 4.

Most major industrial enterprises remain closed and private foreign investors are reluctant to enter a politically volatile situation.

LETTERS

Stop the greedy

Letter to the Editor

AFTER reading the Jordan Times interview with Minister of Health Zuhair Mahas, which appeared on Jan. 23, I could not help but worry about the future of the prices of imported drugs.

It is evident that imported drugs are ridiculously expensive, notwithstanding the Jordanian dinar devaluation. Many people in Jordan are aware of the huge

profits made by the agents of imported medicine, often from hardworking citizens who can barely feed their families. And for importers to demand another price increase is going too far.

A minority of us may be able to afford a huge monthly budget for medication and baby products, but I cannot help but wonder how in the world the majority of citizens can afford to keep their health and their children's health

in good condition. If prices of imported drugs are going to be increased, I can see a major health crisis in the country, while the agents will only become healthier and fatter.

Many of us hope that the Ministry of Health would not give in to the greed of imported drug agents and think of the consumer, and therefore, the majority of citizens' interest. And if the agents feel they have so much

control and power over the country, then the government should disprove this theory immediately.

If it is possible for the Ministry of Health to import directly from the foreign manufacturers, at lower prices, then, why not? This can only be a great service to citizens. We are, after all, talking about the most important aspect of human life: health.

Sana Attieh



In Africa between 60-80 per cent of the population are bound to be effected by malaria

Drug-resistant malaria spreading in Africa

By Robert Mahoney
Reuters

ABIDJAN — When the sun sets in Africa young children face death.

Dusk brings the anopheles mosquito, bearer of one of the world's biggest child-killers, malaria.

The disease, which produces raging fevers and bone-jarring chills is on the rise, killing three million people a year and resisting the drugs used to fight it.

Half the planet's five billion inhabitants live in malarial zones, and 20 million travellers a year pass through them.

Researchers are working on a vaccine but many specialists think even if it proved effective it would be too expensive to help the Third World.

Malaria's impact is hardest on Africa where climate, poverty, bad sanitation and ignorance provide an ideal breeding ground.

The painless bite of the blood-sucking mosquito kills more than one million African children annually, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Of the 300 million people a year in the world's tropical and sub-tropical zones who catch malaria for the first time, 90 per cent are African.

The line-up any morning at Abidjan's Treichville hospital is evidence enough. Young and old sit sweating or shivering, waiting for handful of pills or better still a shot of quinine. One mother hugs to her three-year-old son who wails with a 40-degree-cenigrade fever. Like millions of other children the boy has never been given anti-malaria tablets and sleeps without a mosquito net.

Drugs will save his life this time before the fever reaches his brain. But they will not stop him being reinfected.

"Sanitary conditions in Africa are bad," said Dr. Christian Voumard, a regional adviser for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Mosquitoes lay their eggs in stagnant water below 1,800 metres in anything from a carelessly discarded tin can to a lake. The mature female injects parasites into humans which incubate in the liver and then infect the blood causing the red corpuscles to burst.

"Malaria means 'bad air' in Italian. People once blamed the gases rather than the insects from the marshes where they lived for the disease.

"For us it is a question of primary health care... teaching people about the disease, how to avoid it and how to use anti-malarial drugs properly," Voumard said.

That is an enormous task, according to malaria experts interviewed during an international conference in Abidjan this month.

For 20 years WHO thought it could wipe out malaria by spraying with insecticides, notably DDT, explained WHO west Africa director Dr. Pie Masumbuko.

Ten years ago it admitted defeat as the mosquitoes grew resistant to chemicals such as DDT which themselves had been condemned as dangerous to humans. Realising it could do little to prevent people being bitten, WHO tried drugs to stop them dying of the bites. Masumbuko explained.

Front line drug

The front line drug was Chloroquine, a cheap tablet-form medicine first used during World War II. It took just 15 years for the mosquitoes to grow resistant to it, first in Vietnam then in the whole of South-East Asia and India. Resistance also developed in North-East Brazil and Colombia, and finally surfaced in Africa along the East Coast.

"Chloroquine resistance is spreading to West Africa which until now had been spared," Masumbuko said.

It is creeping clockwise through sub-Saharan Africa — south through Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia, then north through Zaire, the Congo, Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

Professor Dominique Richard-Lenoble of Libreville University in Gabon said up to 30 per cent of cases there were now Chloroquine resistant.

Chloroquine is virtually useless now in large areas of South-East Asia and South America and the drug that replaced it in the early 1970s, Fansidar, is going the same way.

"It took between 10 and 15 years for resistance to overtake Chloroquine and Fansidar in South-East Asia," said Professor Herve Maisonneuve of Lyon, France.

"But there only about five per cent of the population get malaria in Africa it's between 60 and 80 per cent."

Hope?

What hope is there for suffer-

ers? The old standby is quinine, known since the 16th century for its anti-malarial properties. But it is usually given to cure rather than prevent the sickness, often in the form of injections or an intravenous drip.

This is fine in a modern hospital but in rural areas patients often get insufficient doses, badly administered so the disease roars back with a vengeance, doctors said.

A couple of bright spots on the horizon, however, have come from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Washington. Its discoveries have led to two new drugs — Mefloquine and Halofantrine, both in tablet form. Mefloquine stays in the body long enough to be useful as a preventative for Westerners and others travelling to Chloroquine-resistant areas.

Halofantrine, which is so new it has been approved for sale only in France and four African countries, is for those already suffering a malaria attack.

"These are good alternatives," said UNICEF's Voumard. "but they are too costly for most Africans." Doctors also concede that at least one of the four forms of malaria parasite will eventually develop a resistance to these drugs.

That is why they are so anxious to ensure their proper prescription. Indiscriminate use of Chloroquine helped hasten resistance to the drug.

So what is the experts' advice? For travellers to Chloroquine-resistant areas take Mefloquine, to other areas take Chloroquine and another drug such as Paludrine.

And for the millions who live with the disease each day? The best advice they had was "don't get bitten."

Detecting gas, the Finnish way

By Nigel Stephenson
Reuters

HELSINKI — A unique Finnish research laboratory has developed techniques to sniff out minute traces of deadly chemical weapons in the atmosphere.

Now the Finnish government has offered its resources and expertise to the world as a contribution to international efforts aimed at banning chemical weapons.

"We feel that if there is any banned agent in any sample, we can detect it," said Marjatta Rautio, director of the Finnish project on the verification of chemical weapons.

Rautio, who will attend the talks in Geneva on technical aspects of a future treaty which resume on Tuesday, says the project is the world's only civilian laboratory devoted entirely to chemical arms verification.

For 15 years, it has amassed data on 200 banned chemicals, seeking ways of detecting and analysing the tell-tale signs that nerve gases and other compounds leave in air, soil and water.

Finnish officials say the pioneering work of the Helsinki-based project is winning international support which could bring a comprehensive ban closer.

At the recent Paris chemical arms conference, Finnish Foreign Minister Kalevi Sorsa offered the project's facilities for some of the crucial analytical tasks which would follow the signing of a convention.

He also told the conference, called to bolster the flagging 1925 protocol banning the use of chemical weapons in war, that the project would train chemists from developing countries in verification techniques free of charge from 1990.

"We hope that our offer will, in a tangible way, stimulate interest in the future convention," Sorsa said.

said.

Since September, the unit, which is a joint effort of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Helsinki University, has also been on a United Nations list of experts which could be sent to a battlefield where use of chemical weapons was suspected.

"We have the gas masks and the suits," said Rautio.

As a civilian unit, the project is free to publish its findings and it has already produced 13 volumes on its work.

The team of eight funded by the ministry and three university-funded assistants has been able to trace minute quantities of chemicals far from where they were released.

Rautio said a millionth part of one millionth of a gram of a banned agent could be detected.

In one test, 10 kilogrammes of a harmless substance which simulates sarin, a nerve agent stockpiled by both superpowers, were released into the air over central Finland. Using aircraft and ground sensors, they found traces 200 km away.

In another, 10 milligrammes of sarin and of another agent, soman, were placed on an island off Helsinki. Despite spring sea breezes, the team found traces of sarin in air samples a week later and of soman after a fortnight.

Rautio said small amounts of an agent could be produced without direction but this would not pose a threat.

"The danger is if some facility could produce militarily-significant amounts of agent and there I hope we could detect them," she said.

She believes it would also be possible to ascertain from samples whether a factory had ever produced chemical weapons and been cleaned up and converted to another use.

The story of Mohammad Gul

NEW DELHI — Drawing himself up to his full height, Gul Mohammad vehemently insists that, at 63 centimetres, he is the world's shortest man. He is scornful of the claim that in the Caribbean's Dominican Republic there is someone who is eight cm. shorter.

Far more than simple pride is involved in deciding to whom the unique distinction — and a place in the record books — belongs. For 32-year-old Mohammad is convinced that the undisputed title could lead to a complete change in his lifestyle.

Then he is certain that he would no longer be earning the pittance of less than five rupees a day selling homemade sweets in back streets of the walled city of old Delhi. As a celebrity, he is sure that he could even break into India's busy film industry.

The publicity surrounding the disputed accolade has already brought Mohammad a taste of fame. Referring to his appearances on radio and television, he said: "Previously, no one even asked my name — and now they want interviews."

He has also been officially entertained by the mayor of New Delhi, while there have been a number of important callers at his house. One benefit from this is

that the local roadsweepers have become particularly diligent.

Mohammad was a normal sized baby, but soon stopped growing. Doctors were consulted and eventually they made it clear that the child would not grow any taller.

The boy has to give up his schooling because fellow-pupils made fun to him. And life has been no easier for the adult Mohammad. At home he is carried up the stairs on other people's shoulders, and his hands are so tiny that an aunt has to bathe him and comb his hair.

Moreover, viewed from a height of about 60 cm, the world can have so many additional problems and dangers. Mohammad admits to being scared of dogs, cats and crows because they harass him when he is eating alone in the open.

According to the latest record books, the world's shortest man is 30-year-old Nelson de la Rosa, of the Dominican Republic, who is 72 cms tall. But if Gul Mohammad has his way, these books will have to be revised.

At the other end of the scale, the title of being the world's tallest man is held by a 44-year-old Mozambican, Gabriel Estavao Monjane. He measures 2.52 metres — Lion features.



Chekhov: "Intersecting hopes, angers and frustrations..."

Precisely, Mr. Chekhov

By Michael Kustow

Chekhov: A Spirit Set Free, by V.S. Pritchett (Hodders and Stoughton £12.95)

"YOU confuse two things," Chekhov wrote to his publisher, Suvorin, "solving a problem and stating a problem correctly. It is only the second that is obligatory for the artist." Chekhov's way of stating a problem correctly involved creating works that have an almost mystical sense of time, the precision of a film-editor and a refusal to linger over a situation or milk an emotion.

Both in his biography and in the shapes of his fiction he is famously elusive and reserved. This lightness, dealing with weighty matters, is his liberty. It is a balance painstakingly achieved, as he develops from his early vaudevilles to the polyphony of his late stories, and of Three Sisters and The Cherry Orchard.

Many writers today make Chekhov an emblem, Seamus Heaney, in his recent essay-collection The Government of the Tongue, depicts Chekhov the citizen, the serf's grandson, choosing to confront the cruelty and backwardness of his country, yet staying true to the freedoms and delight of art.

A bottle of champagne called for on Chekhov's deathbed features in the last year by Raymond Carver, who had much of Chekhov's glancing penetration. Carver's story ends with a close-up of the young waiter who is sent by Chekhov's wife to fetch the undertaker. Her instructions are a metaphor of the spell Chekhov casts over writers and readers:

"He was to behave exactly as if he were engaged on a very important errand, nothing more. And if it would help to keep his movements purposeful he should imagine himself as someone moving down the busy sidewalk carrying in his arms a porcelain vase of roses that he had to deliver to an important man."

This balance of grace and purposefulness is what V.S. Pritchett, himself a deft dancer down the sidewalks of literature, seeks to catch and communicate. A Spirit Set Free is a book pared to the core, whispered notations of a seasoned fellow-writer. And it concentrates on the stories, maintaining that they add up to a richer yield and wider range than the better-known plays.

Pritchett interleaves biography and close reading to trace Chekhov's ripening as a man and an artist. He quotes Chekhov's proud self-definition, so full of the labour of someone turning himself inside out like a glove: "this young man who squeezes the slave out of himself, and who, one fine morning, finds that the blood coursing through his veins is that of a real human being." He relates that hard-won transformation to the facts of Chekhov's life: his harsh grocer father, his dependent brothers, his assumption of responsibility for the whole family, his concern as a landowner, health officer, builder of schools, his conscientiousness as a doctor when he practised medicine.

"Medicine is my lawful wife, literature my mistress, and there is no discipline in me," he said. Yet there was, and he was far from being the saintly, poignant figure relished by sentimental Chekhov-lovers: he got his sister

to serve his domestic needs, and ruined her marriage chances. And whether from deep shyness or the emotional volatility that came from his tuberculosis, or from what Pritchett calls his low sexual temperature, he kept various women in emotional thrall until he married Olga Knipper.

Pritchett traces the way Chekhov distanced himself from Dostoevsky's "shrillness", Tolstoy's moralism and the neatness of Maupassant. As reserved as his protagonist, Pritchett rarely ventures generalisations about these stories, except to murmur that "good stories do not come straight from real experience, but evolve from contemplating an essence of it."

Chekhov distilled this essence from a mosaic of tiny details, collected with apparent effortlessness, which glint from the surface of everything he wrote: like this disagreeable husband, "a handsome and rather arrogant person, who liked lighting cigarettes from icon-lamps and who was a habitual whistler." Pritchett collects fine details about Chekhov: his sensitivity to sounds, his loose-woven endings, with life's indifferent continuity seeping through.

The stories are more muted in their passion than the plays, but in both, Chekhov's characters are potentially full-hearted people stifled and sapped in a lethargic society.

Pritchett brings out well the web of intersecting hopes, angers and frustrations, the cat's-paw of cross-purposes, and the steady tide of time which, more than the fate of any single character, add up to an enduring state of the soul we call Chekhovian — The Guardian.

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Bush warns central bank chief not to hinder economic growth

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — President Bush, reacting to tough anti-inflation comments by Federal Reserve (Fed) Chairman Alan Greenspan, said Thursday he did not want the U.S. central bank to tame inflation at the expense of economic growth.

"I don't want to see us move so strongly against fear of inflation that we impede growth," Bush told reporters.

Greenspan told Congress Wednesday that the Fed would keep a tight grip on credit because inflation was already too high and could rise even faster unless the economy slowed down.

The warning shot across the Fed's bows could set the stage for a battle of wills between Bush and Greenspan. Although the Fed is independent of the administration, its chairman in practice strives to avoid conflict with the White House.

In contrast to the optimistic growth forecasts that Bush is likely to adopt for his budget plan, the Fed chairman said the long-term growth potential of the economy was no more than 2.5 to three per cent a year.

If the economy grew any faster, inflation would accelerate because factories were already working flat out and labour was scarce, he said.

By contrast, the fiscal 1990 budget plan submitted two weeks ago by former president Reagan assumed the economy would expand by 3.5 per cent in 1989 and 3.4 per cent in 1990. It projected growth of 3.2 per cent from 1991 to 1994.

Budget Director Richard Darman has said Bush would stick to

those assumptions in the budget plan he is expected to submit by mid-February. Darman and Bush are counting on swelling tax revenues from a strong economy to reduce the deficit without raising taxes.

Bush, who said he had been only a summary of Greenspan's comments, was not specific about his expectations for the economy but commented: "We have to keep expanding opportunity for the working men and women of this country."

Greenspan's deputy, Fed Vice-Chairman Manuel Johnson, said earlier Wednesday that the Fed was not determined at all costs to slow growth down to the 2.5 per cent rate.

The economy expanded by more than three per cent in 1988, setting aside the impact of the drought.

Johnson told a conference organised by Citizens for a Sound Economy that the Fed did not have a hard growth target because no one knew exactly how fast the economy could expand without igniting inflation.

Bush administration asks Congress to end trade violations

Meanwhile, the administration of President Bush has asked Congress to change U.S. trade rules

that international panels have declared to be in violation of an agreement with other trading countries.

"If we want other nations to eliminate... illegal trade barriers when we win before a panel, we must be equally prepared to change our actions and policies when we lose," said Judith Bello, general counsel to the U.S. trade representative.

She was testifying before the International Trade Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee in the House of Representatives.

"We must show we're not a scowflaw (habitual breaker of laws)," Congressman Sam Gibbons agreed.

He is chairman of the subcommittee and a major force in U.S. trade policy.

The second is the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which has nearly 100 governments as members.

The GATT organisation sponsors the "Uruguay Round" negotiations in which the U.S. government has been trying unsuccessfully for a long-term agreement on ending subsidies to farmers. These subsidies cost consumers and taxpayers tens of billions of dollars a year.

Bello said the rules she wants changed are more important than they seem because there are widespread doubts about U.S. intentions among other negotiators.

At issue was a tax on imports of petroleum and some petroleum products passed by Congress in 1986 to help finance a "super-

fund" for cleaning up toxic waste. The tax on imported products was 11.7 U.S. cents a barrel, 3.5 cents more than the tax on U.S. production of the same items. A barrel contains 42 gallons (160 litres).

In June 1987, an international panel ruled that the difference was a discrimination against other countries that violated GATT. Other governments threatened to retaliate against the United States. To avoid that, Reagan's administration offered to negotiate compensation with the countries affected.

There have been talks with Canada, Mexico and the 12 countries represented by the European Community (EC), but no conclusion has been reached.

The EC estimates that the tax cost its member countries \$26.6 million a year.

Bello said it would be preferable to get rid of the differential.

Also at issue is a "user fee" for the services of the U.S. customs, based on the value of products imported. Another international panel ruled that also to be a violation of the accord, which says such fees should be based on actual cost to the customs service.

According to Ella Krucoff, press officer for the EC in Washington, EC members paid \$22.2 million in such fees in 1987.

"The U.S. fee must be revised to tie it more closely to the actual cost of processing particular entries," Bello said.

The "user fee" programme brought in \$787 million last year, according to Harry Carnes, director of the U.S. customs service user fee task force.

Chinese scholar assails high corruption

PEKING (R) — Corruption among party and government officials in China is at its worst level in 40 years and is hard to control without radical changes in the system, one of the country's top Marxists has said.

In an interview, Su Shaozhi, former head of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought at the elite China Academy of Social Sciences, said corruption permeated all levels of government.

"There is too much concentration of power, no democracy and no real supervision of government officials," he said. "What Lord Acton said applies — power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely."

A speech by Su last month in which he attacked the party's

ideological policies provoked a storm after being published in a Shanghai weekly, enraging the party's powerful propaganda department.

In the last ideological campaign, against "bourgeois liberalism" in 1987, Su, 66, lost his post as head of the institute but remains a professor at the academy and a prolific writer.

In his study, volume of Lenin's collected works in Chinese stand text to an English transcript of Abraham Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg in 1863, in which he advocated "government of the people, by the people for the people."

Corruption in China has boomed since 1985, with increasing decentralisation of the economy and the "double track"

system under which there are two prices for the same commodity, one a low state price and a much higher free market price.

Su said many price increases were a result of abuse of the two-track system by officials with access to cheap state-supplied goods. The officials then resell the goods on the free market, he said.

Su said that while Peking wanted to stop corruption it was difficult because of the web of mutual interests and lack of independence of supervisory bodies. "The party needs to democratise itself but has done little of it. To beat corruption, we need a free press, freedom of opinion and investigative bodies that are independent," he said.

The press publishes stories ev-

eryday of corruption and misuse of power by officials.

"These are only the flies," Su said. "Who dares to touch the tiger's bottom?" — a reference to high officials.

"The media is not allowed to write about corruption of officials above a certain rank without approval from Peking," he noted.

Public deception

He said socialists did not fully trust their people and constantly told them things were going well when they were not.

"They should tell the people that there is a price to pay to achieve reform and persuade them to overcome the difficulties together," he emphasised.

Soviet economist puts deficit at \$161b

MOSCOW (R) — A top Kremlin economic adviser, giving a new slant on problems facing Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, has indicated that the country's budget deficit amounted to 20 per cent of all government spending.

Leonid Abalkin, director of the

Moscow Economics Institute, told reporters the actual deficit amounted to 100 billion roubles (\$161 billion) when credits from state-run banks were included. "In the whole world, bank borrowings are considered a means of covering budget deficits. So,

scientifically speaking, our deficit is 100 billion roubles," said Abalkin, who is known to have Gorbachev's confidence.

He made his remarks to foreign journalists after a news conference during which he described the deficit as "colossal" but argued that it could be wiped out within three years by strict financial policies.

He said his institute had presented a recovery plan to Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov including cuts in defence costs — an area where Gorbachev has already moved to reduce spending — and a drop in state subsidies to industry and farming.

"The plan needs to be implemented promptly, and be in

place by the end of this year," Abalkin said. But he did not know if it would be adopted entirely.

He told the news conference that if the proposed measures were implemented by 1995, the Soviet people could expect the Kremlin chief's "perestroika" to have improved their living standards.

Over the past year, there have been mounting complaints from ordinary people voiced in the Soviet press that life was becoming harder, with shortages of many food products, household and consumer goods.

Gorbachev has himself described the situation in the economy as critical, arguing that the present leadership is struggling with a legacy from predecessors who allowed the deficit to develop without revealing its existence.

At the annual budget session of the Supreme Soviet or parliament last November, Finance Minister Boris Gostev set the "shortfall in financial resources" under the 1989 budget at 36 billion roubles (\$58 billion).

He later referred to this figure as the deficit, but also said government borrowings totalled 63.4 billion roubles (\$102 billion). Abalkin said the two figures added made up the real deficit.

The Supreme Soviet, adjusting Gostev's figures, cut the final budgeted deficit to 35 billion roubles (\$56 billion).

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Analysts expect prices of oil to stabilise near \$15 a barrel

TOKYO (R) — Middle East crude oil prices will stabilise around \$15 a barrel for the next two months, but weaken in the second quarter unless oil producers cooperate to control output, industry analysts said.

Prices plummeted by 75 cents after talks between experts from OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) and non-OPEC oil producing nations Thursday failed to result in specific proposals for output cuts.

OPEC and non-OPEC oil ministers will meet at an unspecified later date, OPEC Secretary-General Subroto said after the joint experts meeting.

"The market expected something more, therefore they were disappointed," said Yasuhiro Tashiro, chief economist for the Idemitsu oil company.

The benchmark Mideast, from Dubai, dropped to around \$14.25 for March loading cargoes on the freely traded Far Eastern market Friday, from \$15 in late trading Thursday.

"Today the market's a bit soft but I expect a small recovery," said a trader for a major interna-

tional oil company.

"The first-quarter cargo market will continue around \$15, but unless OPEC and non-OPEC producers take further action we forecast there will be a sluggish market in the second quarter," he added.

Oil prices have gained about \$4 a barrel since November when OPEC ministers agreed to cut output by 20 per cent in the first half of 1989.

Total production is estimated to have dropped to around 19 million barrels per day (b/d) from nearly 23 million in December.

But traders said OPEC needs the cooperation of non-OPEC producers to reduce output still further in the second quarter when demand is seasonally lower.

They said a \$2 drop in prices was likely unless production is cut after the northern hemisphere winter demand season ends.

OPEC production of 19 million b/d in the second quarter will lead to a 500,000 to one million b/d build up in world stocks, said Masaru Kai, a deputy general manager at Nippon oil company.

Kai predicted Mideast oil prices would average \$15 to \$16 a barrel in the first quarter, but fall to \$13 to \$14 in the second quarter if OPEC output remained at 19 million b/d.

OPEC's target price is \$18 a barrel.

The experts from OPEC and non-OPEC oil producing countries met separately Wednesday and then jointly Thursday to discuss possible cooperation to help curb world oil supply and buoy prices.

The non-OPEC countries which took part in the talks were Angola, Colombia, Colombia, Egypt, Malaysia, Mexico and Oman, which together pump some eight million b/d.

Envoys from the Soviet Union — the world's largest oil producer — Norway, North Yemen, the U.S. states of Texas and Alaska, and Canada's Alberta province also took part as observers.

"If we take this as just a step toward cooperation, it's not so bad," said Tashiro. "But if they are to reduce output in the second quarter they obviously need another meeting before the end of March."

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Oil Minister Ali Al Khalifa Al Sabah has denied an Iranian report that his country was exceeding its oil production quota set by OPEC.

Sheikh Ali told Al Rai Al Aam newspaper in remarks published Friday Kuwait was producing its full quota of 1.036 million barrels daily without any excess.

The Iranian news agency IRNA said Wednesday three major Gulf Arab OPEC members — Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — were violating their quotas.

Saudi Arabia has already denied the report and UAE President Zaid Ibn Sultan Al Nahayan Thursday reiterated his country's commitment to the OPEC accord.

Sheikh Ali said he expected world oil prices to remain at their current levels for the time being. He said future price levels depended on whether all OPEC states stuck to their self-imposed output ceilings.

Sheikh Ali said last week Kuwait was producing within its quota and would continue to do so as long as other OPEC members did.

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

Thursday, Jan. 26, 1989					
Central Bank official rates					
	Buy	Sell			
			French franc	78.1	78.5
			Japanese yen (for 100)	383.4	383.3
U.S. dollar	489.0	491.0	Dutch guilder	235.3	236.5
Pound Sterling	856.3	870.6	Swedish crown	77.9	78.3
Deutsche mark	265.8	271.1	Italian lira (for 100)	36.3	36.5
Swiss franc	313.0	314.6	Belgian franc (for 10)	127.1	127.7

Amman Financial Market weekly trading

Following is a summary of trading during last week and the previous week:

	Jan. 21-25	Jan. 14-18
Daily average	JD 2,032,186	JD 1,350,412
Total volume	JD 10,160,931	JD 6,752,059
Total shares	7,864,374	5,399,221
No. of contracts	6,044	4,287

Sectoral trading:

	JD 7,473,738	JD 4,532,301
Industrial	(73.6%)	(67.1%)
Financial	JD 2,086,199	JD 1,798,989
	(20.5%)	(26.6%)
Service	(4.9%)	(4.3%)
Insurance	(1.0%)	(0.2%)
Share price index	127.8	126.1
No. of companies	69	67
Price movement (rise)	51	37
(decline)	8	14
(stable)	10	16

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midday on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Friday.

	1.7672/82	U.S. dollar
One Sterling	1.843/53	Canadian dollar
One U.S. dollar	1.8508/18	Deutsche mark
	2.0875/85	Dutch guilders
	1.5723/30	Swiss francs
	38.68/78	Belgian francs
	6.2850/2900	French francs
	1353/1354	Italian lire
	128.50/60	Japanese yen
	6.2980/3030	Swedish crowns
	6.6980/7010	Norwegian crowns
	7.1800/50	Danish crowns
One ounce of gold	402.00/402.50	U.S. dollars

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

SYDNEY — Weaker commodity prices and concern about interest rates took the steam out of the Australian share market. The All Ordinaries index closed up 1.2 at 1,542.3.

TOKYO — Share prices rose to a record close, the third this week, in broad-based, active trade as sentiment was boosted by a third straight post-crash high on Wall Street. The Nikkei rose 134.32 to 31,646.13.

HONG KONG — Strong bullish sentiment pushed stocks to their seventh post-crash high of 1989. The Hang Seng index closed 46.38 higher at 2,956.95.

SINGAPORE — Another day of hectic trading saw share prices rising over a broad front but the market closed with pared gains. The Straits Times industrial index rose 6.77 to 1,115.48.

BOMBAY — Prices withstood sporadic profit-taking by institutional investors after the market opened firm, and closed with widespread gains. Tata Steel rose 33.5 rupees to 1,245.

FRANKFURT — Shares more than recovered Thursday's losses and closed around Friday's highs, helped by strong foreign interest in chemical, steel and engineering shares. The DAX index rose 13.88 to 1,343.58.

ZURICH — Shares closed easier in moderate trading as worries about Swiss interest rates dampened sentiment. The all-share Swiss index fell 1.1 to 972.1.

PARIS — Prices had extended early gains by midday in cautious trading, boosted by New York's strong performance and prospects of booming corporate results.

LONDON — Shares remained very firm ahead of 1530 GMT, when trading for the new account can take place a one per cent premium on deals. A firmer Wall Street opening helped the market. At 1506 GMT the FTSE 100 was up 48.7 at 2,008.5.

NEW YORK — Blue chips extended an early surge in mid-morning, buoyed by... strength in the bond market and a rush of buying. The Dow was up 17 at 2,308.

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China-bound Bush cautious on Soviets, Mideast

WASHINGTON (AP) — President George Bush's trip to China next month underscores the importance of U.S. relations with the world's largest country, and although the two have no overriding problems, Bush has some serious issues to discuss with the Chinese.

One is the joint effort the United States and China are making to promote reconciliation between South Korea and North Korea. Another is the growing improvement in relations between China and the Soviet Union.

Bush's trip will be the first visit to Peking by a U.S. chief executive in nearly five years. Former President Ronald Reagan visited the Chinese capital in April 1984.

But while Bush looks to the Far East, stopping also in Japan for Emperor Hirohito's funeral, two other regions

where problems are far more pressing have been consigned at least for now to the back burner.

Bush and his top foreign policy advisers, Secretary of State James A. Baker III and Brent Scowcroft, the National Security Adviser, are taking their time about the Soviet Union and the Middle East.

Baker, who is inexperienced in both areas, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during his confirmation hearing that he wanted to "review the bidding" in U.S.-Soviet negotiations to reduce long-range nuclear weapons.

Baker also said the United States should avoid "a headlong rush" to provide Moscow with loans and credits, which are traditionally a useful tool in improving relations.

Scowcroft has more experience in foreign policy matters,

but he too is taking a very cautious approach in dealing with Moscow. He worries that Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's peace offensive may have as one of its main goals "making trouble within the alliance" of Western nations. He is suspicious that Gorbachev's motivation is to buy time to reform the Soviet economy — which is a lot different from approaching Gorbachev primarily as a world leader trying to ease East-West tensions.

"I think the cold war is not over," Scowcroft said in a recent assessment of the super-power relationship.

While Bush has not insisted on concessions from Moscow before ascending the summit with Gorbachev, the White House spokesman, Martin Fitzwater, said Thursday they would meet only "when the

time is right."

It's a bit early to make sweeping judgments, but the indications are a slowdown in the reconciliation promoted by Reagan and former Secretary of State George P. Shultz after Gorbachev's rise to power in the Kremlin in March 1985.

There is a similar go-slow attitude developing toward the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, which drew serious attention from the Reagan administration toward the end but hardly the concentration trained on Moscow.

Reagan and Shultz, in their final days, broke a 13-year embargo and opened U.S. talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Shultz made five trips to the Middle East in 1988, and while neither the Arabs nor Israelis agreed to negotiations, Shultz left office optimistic about the future.

UNESCO hopeful U.S., U.K. will rejoin after policy change

MANILA (R) — The director-general of UNESCO, the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation said Friday he was optimistic the United States and Britain would soon announce plans to rejoin the body they quit in protest four years ago.

Federico Mayor Zaragoza said he had made drastic changes in UNESCO's goals and organisation in the past year, eradicating

problems that prompted Washington and London to leave.

"It is already clear that UNESCO is (back) on its tracks," he told Reuters in an interview during an official visit in Manila.

The United States and Britain quit the 158-nation agency after complaining it was financially mismanaged, too politicised and had an anti-Western bias while under the direction of Mayor

Zaragoza's Senegalese predecessor, Amadou Mahtar m'Bow.

Mayor Zaragoza, a Spaniard, said one big change had been his removal last year of four UNESCO regional heads based in Egypt, Senegal, Thailand and Venezuela who were m'Bow appointees.

The head of UNESCO said since replacing m'Bow in November 1987, he had saved \$22 million.



Federico Mayor Zaragoza

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Bangladesh poll clashes kill 1

DHAKA (R) — One man was killed and over 100 people injured Thursday in clashes brought on by municipal election rivalries, police said. They said supporters of local candidates fought with home-made bombs, guns, spears and knives in many areas before the campaigning was officially ended Thursday midnight.

The government earlier ordered police to crack down on unauthorised possession and use of explosives, firearms and other lethal weapons to ensure peaceful voting Saturday. At least 150 people were killed and hundreds injured in fierce clashes during rural elections in February, 1988, according to official figures.

Dutch free Nazi criminals

THE HAGUE (R) — The Dutch parliament voted Friday to release two Nazi war criminals imprisoned since World War II. The vote was 83 to 55 in favour of a pardon for Franz Fischer, 87 and Ferdinand aus der Fuenten, 79, who were convicted for sending thousands of Jews to their death during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. Once released from their 43-year-long imprisonment the two would be expelled to West Germany and would be "persona non grata" in the Netherlands, Justice Minister Frederik Kortbeek said. Usually, parliamentarians voted on an individual basis, showing deep divisions in all major political parties on an issue which has stirred an emotional public debate here. In the debate, Kortbeek said the two war criminals should be freed because their further detention went against humane legal tradition and poisoned Dutch society.

Chun aide charged with abuse

SEOUL (R) — One of former South Korean strongman Chun Doo Hwan's most feared aides was charged Friday with extorting millions of dollars in political funds from industrialists, government prosecutors said. Chang Se-Dong, Chun's security chief and once rumoured to be his chosen successor, is accused of collecting the money to pay for a political institute Chun planned to use as a power base after he retired. Chang, who denies the charge, was taken to a prison outside Seoul. He was not handcuffed as South Korean prisoners usually are. He is the latest of dozens of people, including Chun relatives and former government officials, now in jail or facing trial over political and financial scandals involving millions of dollars during the disgraced leader's rule. Chun himself is under investigation by the opposition-dominated parliament over his role in a 1980 massacre in Kwangju. Troops killed nearly 200 civilians when they crushed an uprising Chun in the southwestern city.

Honduran chief killed

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — A former armed forces chief who helped the Reagan administration organise the Nicaraguan rebel forces in Honduras was ambushed and killed Wednesday, officials and witnesses said. Salvador Lobo, director of emergencies at the state hospital, told reporters General Gustavo Alvarez Martinez died of gunshot wounds near his home in the capital's Florencia district. Witnesses said six gunmen waited for Alvarez Martinez outside his home and poured machine-gun fire into his car. The driver was also killed and Alvarez Martinez's son-in-law was wounded, police said. One witness, Alba Luz Guzman, told the AP the men "intercepted me, forced me to get out of my car, then fled in my automobile."

Cuba mortality rate ranks 22nd

HAVANA (R) — Cuba's infant mortality rate has dropped to 11.9 per 1,000 live births, ranking 22nd in the world and at the level of some industrialised countries, the official newspaper Granma said Wednesday. Calling infant mortality a "barometer of social welfare," the daily said the rate was over 60 per 1,000 before the 1959 revolution, similar to the rates today in Brazil, El Salvador and Guatemala. Health care and education have been priorities of the Cuban socialist revolution. A rate of 11.9 per 1,000, compared with 13.3 in 1987, put Cuba first in Latin America and just behind the United States, with 10 per 1,000 live births, and Italy and New Zealand with 11. Cuba was ahead of Greece, with 12 deaths per 1,000 live births, and Israel with 14, according to United Nations figures.

100 criminals executed in China city

HONG KONG (AP) — Nearly 100 people were executed during the first 20 days of the year in China's southern province of Guangdong, where an alarming crime wave shows no sign of abating, a newspaper quoted Chinese officials Friday as saying. The death sentences given by local courts during the 20-day period was double the number during the same period last year, the independent Ming Pao daily quoted Mai Chongkai, the acting president of the provincial People's High Court, as saying.

Hun Sen ends peace mission to Thailand

BANGKOK (R) — Kampuchean Prime Minister Hun Sen Friday completed a visit to Thailand that turned into a propaganda coup in the ongoing efforts to bring peace to his country.

"We are building a cement bridge between the two countries instead of the bamboo bridge we have used for the past 10 years," he told reporters as he visited the Grand Palace, Bangkok's top tourist attraction.

He was due to fly home later after a three-day stay that included talks on a political settlement and on future economic and trade links. One Western diplomat here called it a "major propaganda victory."

For a decade Thailand has supported Khmer Rouge and other guerrilla groups fighting from the Thai-Kampuchean border to overthrow Hun Sen's communist government, installed after the 1978 Vietnamese invasion.

But a break in the international stalemate over Kampuchea which brought direct talks between

Vietnam and China and between Vietnam and Thailand, opened the way for Hun Sen's trip.

Diplomats here said its results could be devastating for the opposition coalition, which includes the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge and exiled leader Prince Norodom-Sihanouk, even though the coalition still has the United Nations recognition denied Hun Sen's government.

"Things are moving very fast," said Hun Sen's Deputy Foreign Minister Sok An. "This is the beginning and it is a good implementation of the ideas of (Thai prime minister) Chatichai (Choonhavan) about turning the Indochina battlefield into a market place. The process is moving."

Chatichai, who took office last August, has sought to break down the formal barriers that prevented movement towards a Kampuchean settlement.

Thailand's deputy government spokesman Likhit Hongladarom told reporters: "You cannot think

Secret Polish talks under way on deal to legalise Solidarity

WARSAW (R) — Solidarity leader Lech Walesa met Poland's interior minister Friday for secret negotiations to set up formal talks with the government on legalising the banned union and making a deal on the country's future.

The meeting aimed to make final preparations for full-scale talks which the government hopes will forge a national coalition with the opposition to pull Poland out of economic crisis.

Walesa and a seven-man Solidarity team swept into a government villa in the village of Magdalenka about 20 kilometres south of Warsaw shortly after Interior Minister General Czeslaw Kiszczak entered. Neither side commented to reporters.

Two Roman Catholic Church officials also went into the talks. Kiszczak's team was believed to include Politburo members Stanislaw Ciosek and Janusz Reykowski and representatives of the official OPZZ unions.

Walesa and Kiszczak were meeting for the sixth time since last August to discuss convening talks, which are expected to start Feb. 5 or 6.

Final obstacles to the talks appeared to be removed last week when the ruling Communist Party

said the timing and terms of legalising the union it suppressed in 1981 could be discussed.

Preparations for the talks have speeded up since Sunday, when Solidarity accepted the party's proposals.

Walesa held secret discussions with other Solidarity leaders and advisers Thursday after arriving from the northern port of Gdansk where strikes gave rise to the communist world's first independent trade union in 1980.

Setting out Friday morning to meet Kiszczak, Walesa declined to give any details of what they would discuss, saying only: "Poles like to talk to each other."

Solidarity sources said the day's talks were likely to be long and hard but gave no details. A government spokesman declined to comment.

The government invited Walesa to talks with independent public figures and Roman Catholic Church officials last August during the worst labour unrest since

Solidarity's 16-month legal existence which challenged communist rule.

Walesa helped curb strikes but refused to attend the talks unless the authorities promised to consider legalising Solidarity.

The union finally agreed to the meeting after the party's policy-making central committee last week offered terms for legalising Solidarity as part of increased political and trade union freedoms.

Party sources said the offer, which included lifting a 1982 ban on forming new unions, was prompted by fears of labour unrest over soaring inflation and the need to win over a distrustful public to economic reforms.

Walesa has cautioned against euphoria, saying it remains to be seen if quick restoration of Solidarity as a self-governing, independent union is a real possibility.

"If it turns out to be an illusion, then we will still have to fight for the most important issues," he said Sunday.

The offer has also angered some members of the OPZZ unions set up to replace Solidarity. They say the party's offer has angered some workers and could prompt more unrest.



Hun Sen

in static terms any more. What has been done 10 years ago cannot hold true if circumstances have changed."

He added: "The message our prime minister put across is that the real enemy of Kampuchea is poverty."

Although describing the two rounds of Hun Sen-Chatichai talks as informal, Thai officials said they touched not only on ways to settle the conflict but also on future economic relations.

Argentine rebel led Somoza assassination

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — The leader of this week's assault on an army base tried to overthrow the government in the 1970s and helped assassinate deposed Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, informed sources said.

Enrique Gorriaran Merlo directed the attack Monday on the 3rd infantry regiment base in the western suburb of La Tablada that resulted in the death of 38 people, government and security sources said Thursday.

Gorriaran Merlo, 47, once led the now-defunct People's Revolutionary Army, which openly battled the military after it took power in a 1976 coup. He is believed to have escaped during a 27-hour siege in which army and police forces retook the base, the sources said on condition of anonymity.

Among the dead were eight soldiers and two policemen. One of the policemen died Thursday of wounds suffered in the assault. About 70 others were wounded.

But Gorriaran Merlo was not thought to be among the bodies of 14 armed civilians who remain unidentified, the sources said.

The disclosure came as authorities probed links between the attackers and left-wing organisations. The government claims the assailants were leftist subversives.

Police Thursday raided several

houses in Mar Del Plata, 402 kilometres south of Buenos Aires, and arrested three people but gave no other details.

Gorriaran Merlo, a stocky former architecture student, was involved in the People's Revolutionary Army, which was decimated in the late 1970s during a harsh anti-subversion campaign waged by the military leaders.

Gorriaran Merlo, however, escaped and went to Nicaragua. In published interviews, he said he led a team of Argentine and Nicaraguan guerrillas who assassinated Somoza in 1980 on a street in the Paraguayan capital of Asuncion. Somoza had been ousted by Nicaragua's leftist Sandinistas in 1979.

President Raul Alfonsin ordered the prosecution of Gorriaran Merlo shortly after taking office in December 1983.

Gorriaran Merlo was believed to be living abroad. Last year, a leftist human rights lawyer, Jorge Banos, asked the courts to allow Gorriaran Merlo to return and face trial without being imprisoned.

Police said among those killed in this week's assault was Banos. He and at least two other attackers whose names have been released by police were active in a leftist political group, the Every-one for the Country Movement.



The officers' club, where a group of rebel commandos took refuge, burned at the La Tablada military base outside Buenos Aires, after Argentine soldiers attacked the building with tank and mortar fire Tuesday.

London rejects inquiry clearing film on IRA

LONDON (AP) — The government insisted that a television documentary on three unarmed Irish Republican Army (IRA) guerrillas slain in Gibraltar last year was untruthful despite an independent inquiry that cleared the programme of unfairness allegations.

The continuing clash over the programme, "Death On The Rock," is the latest in a series of confrontations between Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Conservative administration and television journalists.

The programme by Thames television, part of Britain's commercial independent television network, was shown seven weeks after a British anti-terrorist squad killed the IRA trio March 6, 1988. The government sought to suppress the documentary at the time.

A joint statement from Thatcher's office, the foreign office and the Ministry of Defence said Thursday night: "The programme contained many serious and damaging inaccuracies. In a number of important particulars, the

programme failed to pursue the truth, to clarify the facts or present evidence impartially."

The statement said government criticisms were "in no way diminished" by the findings of an independent inquiry, published earlier Thursday. The inquiry concluded the documentary fully satisfied "the requirements of balance, fairness and impartiality."

At an inquest in Gibraltar, a jury ruled by a 9-2 majority Sept. 30 that the three IRA members — Mairead Farrell, 31, Daniel McCann, 30, and Sean Savage, 24 — were killed legally by British troops.

"Death On The Rock" provoked an uproar when it was shown by suggesting that two of the three IRA guerrillas were trying to surrender when they were killed. The government said the three were slain because they made suspicious moves that made the soldiers think they were about to detonate a bomb.

The slayings were condemned by the Irish government and triggered renewed violence among

IRA supporters in Belfast in which nine people, including two British soldiers, died.

The mainly Roman Catholic IRA is fighting to end British rule in predominantly Protestant Northern Ireland and unite it with the Republic of Ireland, where 95 per cent of the people are Catholic.

Thatcher's government contended the three slain IRA members planned to bomb British troops in Gibraltar and the IRA acknowledged the three were "on active service" in the colony on the southern tip of Spain.

Thatcher condemned the programme at the times as "trial by television." But the independent broadcasting authority in charge of commercial television rejected a government demand that the documentary's broadcast be postponed until after the inquest.

Amnesty International has demanded a judicial inquiry into the killing and civil libertarians claim the attack on the film is part of a broader government assault on news media freedom.

Japan 'regrets' Tower's call for increased defence spending

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's defence chief expressed regret Friday over U.S. Defence Secretary-designate John Tower's call for more pressure on Japan to increase its military spending.

"U.S.-Japan defence arrangements have been a pillar of Japan's security and we have been making efforts toward our defence under this framework, and such a policy has been widely trusted by the people," Defence Agency Director General Kichiro Tazawa told reporters after a regularly scheduled cabinet meeting.

"As for Mr. Tower's comment that Japan can greatly increase its defence efforts under the constitution, I have the feeling Mr. Tower does not understand the Japanese people's feelings and perspective," Tazawa said.

Tazawa was responding to

statements made Wednesday by Tower, who is undergoing confirmation hearings before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee.

Tower said the decision to impose on Japan a constitution that "severely restrained them from building a substantial military force" during the U.S. occupation of Japan at the end of World War II was "a lousy idea."

"But I don't believe that constitution is so restraining that they couldn't devote a substantially larger percentage (of spending) to their defence," Tower said.

The Japanese constitution, adopted in 1946 during the U.S. occupation, renounces war and forbids the use of force in settling international disputes. But Japan has been steadily building up its armed forces in recent years in response to heavy pressure from

the United States.

Acting U.S. Defence Secretary William Taft Thursday hailed Japan's increased allotment for defence in its budget for the next fiscal year.

"I commend the government of Japan for continuing to do what is necessary to meet Japan's defence goals and to positively support U.S. forces in Japan," he was quoted by Kyodo News Service as saying. "Given the continuing threat posed by Soviet forces in the Pacific, growth in Japan's defence and cost-sharing efforts is fully justified."

Japan's cabinet this week approved a budget for fiscal 1989 that includes 3.92 trillion yen (\$30.5 billion) for defence spending, a 5.9 per cent increase over the previous year. The budget still must be passed by parliament.

COLUMN

Actor wins suit for 'Fawty' comparison

LONDON (AP) — Comedy actor John Cleese won libel damages Wednesday from a newspaper which claimed he had increasingly come to resemble Basil Fawty, the manic hotel owner he played in the hit television series "Fawlty Towers." His lawyer, Roderick Dada, told the high court that Cleese did not tweak people's ears or routinely fly into manic or irrational rages and "the claim that in real life he resembles Basil Fawty is absurd."

Cleese, 49, accepted undisclosed "substantial" damages, to be donated to a charity of his choice, from publisher Robert Maxwell's Mirror group newspapers, the court said. The newspaper group also agreed to pay Cleese's legal costs and publish an apology, it said. The Daily Mirror reported in August 1987 that Cleese, a founding member of the "Monty Python" troupe, had got into the habit of painfully tweaking the ears of fellow cast members and flying into a rage when they objected during the filming of "A Fish Called Wanda."

Duke pays tribute to queen

LONDON (AP) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth II once had a musical tribute composed just for her by Duke Ellington, but 31 years passed before it got its first live public performance. The queen's daughter, Anne, was guest of honour at a royal festival hall benefit concert to hear the 15-minute work, "The Queen's Suite," performed by U.S. musician Bob Wilber and his band.

"Duke was so overwhelmed at meeting with the queen in 1958 that he composed this longer orchestral work for her, recorded it with his band and instructed that only a single disc should be pressed, for the queen herself," Wilber said in a preconcert interview. Because no sheet music existed, Wilber transcribed it by listening to the music, which Ellington's son, Mercer, allowed to be issued on a disc for public sale in 1976.

Troupe performs wordless 'Othello'

CHICAGO (AP) — Hamlet directed his players to speak "trippingly on the tongue" but the latest players to tackle another of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, Othello, don't speak at all. "Silent Othello," the latest production of the four-year-old Italian American theatre, tells the tale of the Moor of Venice without the Bard's poetry, and also without sets or secondary characters. The five actors on the bare nightclub stage rely instead on mime, dance motions and traditional Italian gestures — most of them impolite. "We don't pretend it's Shakespeare, but you could consider it a mirror to Shakespeare," director Frank Melconi recently said after the first of six weekly performances. "We don't have the verbal techniques to do spoken Shakespeare, but we have other techniques we can use to tell a story," he said. "Othello is the cleanest, dramatically, of Shakespeare's tragedies. It's a fairly simple story of jealousy and revenge."

Woman loses job, then wins fortune

LONDON (AP) — A woman who lost her job Monday, and whose husband was facing unemployment, has become a millionaire two days later by winning big in the soccer pools. Sheila Marshall of Normanton in central England, was due to get a check Wednesday for £634,000 (\$1,122,180) from the Littlewoods Organisation. On Monday, Marshall had been told that the company where she had worked for nine years was closing. Her husband Alan also was facing unemployment because of the imminent closing of the coal mine where he works. The 49-year-old woman said she used the family's star signs — Gemini, Virgo and Pisces — to help pick the lucky numbers.

Turkish woman wins Soviet contest

MOSCOW (AP) — Meltim Hakar of Turkey last week won the first international beauty contest held in Moscow, taking the "Charm 89" title over 28 other contestants from 11 countries. The contest, held at Moscow's Kosmos Hotel, was organised by the Soviet state-run travel agency Intourist, the hotel, a Soviet cultural centre and several other organisations. It drew contestants from Singapore, Greece, West Germany, Norway, as well as several from different parts of the Soviet Union.